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# Sufism in Central Asia

*New Perspectives on Sufi Traditions, 15th–21st Centuries*

*Edited by*

Devin DeWeese  
Jo-Ann Gross



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Cover illustration: At the tomb, near Bukhara (Uzbekistan), of Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband (d. 1389), eponym of the Naqshbandī Sufi *ṭarīqa* (2013, Jo-Ann Gross).

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## Acknowledgments

This volume presents ten papers with roots in a symposium on “Sufism and Islam in Central Asia” held at Princeton University on October 21–22, 2011. The symposium, supported by a generous grant from the family of Leon B. Poullada and sponsored by the Department and Program in Near Eastern Studies at Princeton University, was organized by the editors in conjunction with Professor Muhammad Qasim Zaman. It brought together scholars whose work has dealt with various aspects of the history and contemporary status of Sufi communities in diverse parts of Central Asia, from the 15th century to the 21st, with the aim of addressing a central and ongoing question in the study of Sufism (and of Central Asia): what is the relationship between Sufism as it was manifested in this region prior to the Russian conquest and the Soviet era, on the one hand, and the features of Islamic religious life in the region during the Tsarist, Soviet, and post-Soviet eras on the other, including some referred to and recognizable as “Sufi” activity as well as others not necessarily labeled as such. Sessions addressed issues of sources and interpretative strategies, realignments in Sufi communities and sources from the Russian to the post-Soviet period, and social, political and economic perspectives on Sufi communities.

The symposium marked an important step, we believe, in the development of scholarship on Sufism in Central Asia, and we are especially grateful to the Poullada family for supporting both the gathering itself and the preparation of this volume; the latter process was delayed by unavoidable personal and professional factors, and we are grateful also for the sponsors’ patience during this extended delay. At the same time, the delay allowed, or prompted, a process of updating, rethinking, and reformulation affecting all the papers included here. Some were virtually rewritten, compared with their initial ‘conference paper’ iterations, and all were substantially revised, edited, reviewed, and revised again between 2015 and 2017. The Princeton gathering was the essential catalyst for setting this volume in motion, but the editors are also grateful to all the contributors for their patience, their openness to thinking anew, and above all, the extraordinary intellectual strength and substance they have brought to this project from its inception.

The original gathering involved lively discussions that regrettably could not be fully represented in this volume, beyond the incorporation of insights derived therefrom in the individual papers. It also involved invaluable comments by three discussants—specialists in Sufi history and literature, and in Muslim religious thought more broadly, elsewhere in the Islamic world—Zvi

- Togan, Isenbike. "Chinese Turkestan," v, "Under the Khojas." *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, v, 474–476.
- Vorozheikina, Z. N. "Doislamskie verovaniia kirgizov v XVI v. (Po rukopisi 'Ziia al-kulub')." In *Voprosy filologii i istorii stran sovetского i zarubezhnogo Vostoka* (Moscow, 1961), 182–189.
- Welsford, Thomas. *Four Types of Loyalty in Early Modern Central Asia: The Tūqāy-Tīmūrid Takeover of Greater Mā Warā al-Nahr, 1598–1605*. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Zarcone, Thierry. "Bridging the Gap between Pre-Soviet and Post-Soviet Sufism in Ferghana Valley (Uzbekistan): The Naqshbandi Order between Tradition and Innovation." In *Popular Movements and Democratization in the Islamic World*, ed. Masatoshi Kisaichi (London/New York: Routledge, 2006), 43–56.

## CHAPTER 2

## Naqshband's Lives: Sufi Hagiography between Manuscripts and Genre

Shahzad Bashir

Our ability to discuss the premodern religious history of Muslim Central Asia rests heavily on evaluating Sufi works belonging to many different genres that can be accessed only in manuscript form to this day. Surveying the state of the field, one can find numerous evocations of problems occasioned by this fact, including regrets regarding difficulty of access (particularly during the Soviet period), inadequacies of cataloguing and preservation, lack of proper scholarly care in dealing with works to be found in different versions, and the impropriety of drawing general conclusions when, very likely, much relevant material has yet to be consulted. These are all legitimate issues that must be emphasized for further work in the field. In this essay, I wish to contribute to the discussion regarding sources by examining the intellectual basis on which we are conditioned to think about the relationship between manuscripts and the literary texts they contain in the process of carrying out historiographical reconstruction. While work on texts and contexts continues apace, it is advisable to scrutinize the framework for analyzing the material artifacts that provide us access to the relevant history. Such deliberation enhances the value of our accounts of the Central Asian past by maximizing what we can glean from the sources.

When considering genres such as Sufi hagiography, we must, I suggest, self-consciously parse the form of textuality available to us into elements that have gone into its production. Doing this reveals specific questions for evaluating the texts as repositories of information. To this end, the ensuing discussion offers an interpretive scheme in which I propose distinguishing between four elements, nested within each other, that correlate between surviving manuscripts and hagiography as a prominent literary genre in Central Asia in the approximate period 1300–1700 CE. For purposes of illustration, I concentrate on works on Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband (d. 791/1389), the eponym of the Naqshbandi chain of Sufi authority who is buried near Bukhara. Naqshband is an especially useful case because of his vast and varied posthumous footprint as a putative progenitor of socioreligious identities in Central Asia and beyond.

When it comes to materials pertaining to Naqshband and similar figures, I suggest that we differentiate between the following elements: 1. The physical manuscripts that are unique witnesses from the times and places where they were produced; 2. The texts that are contained within these manuscripts, representing literary production attributable to authors and compilers; 3. A narrative fund consisting of the common set of stories and morals that is shared across hagiographical texts; and 4. Hagiography as a genre that encompasses the relevant material as a distinctive literary phenomenon. These four elements represent a methodological categorization for analytical purposes: I intend them as elements of a map used to make sense of a territory rather than a claim about the territory itself. My approach, described in greater detail below, derives from my struggles to make sense of hagiographical narratives and what I have learned from the work of other scholars.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the focus on texts, my effort in this essay hypothesizes the historical relationship between literary artifacts and the sociointellectual world constituted by Central Asian Sufi communities. The categories I have created represent, simultaneously, my understanding of the surviving written materials and how I imagine the societies that gave rise to them. My interpretive rubric is an attempt to get out of the problematic bind that has led many modern readers to regard hagiographical literature as a mass of useless miracle mongering rather than proper history. I try to understand how these texts were meaningful for their original creators and then translate my comprehension into terms that we today regard as plausible representations of the past. This approach sidesteps the question of truth and falsity as it pertains to hagiographical representations while also respecting the sources' integrity and seeing them as critical resources for reconstructing their historical circumstances and the social imagination from which they derive. Work along these lines is necessary for fuller and better utilizations of hagiographical sources, with due attention to the literary and social complexities inherent in the materials. Below, I first describe my proposed interpretive scheme in summary, followed by detailed discussions of the four elements I have delineated above. In the process, I pay special attention to sources for the life of Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband.

1 My understanding has been shaped by the effort to write a cultural history of the Persianate Sufi world during the 14th and 15th centuries CE (see Shahzad Bashir, *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam* [New York: Columbia University Press, 2011]). For an earlier reflection on the use of hagiographical narratives for writing history see Jürgen Paul, "Hagiographische Texte als historische Quelle," *Saeculum*, 41 (1990), 17–43.

### An Interpretive Paradigm

The stakes involved in my presentation bear repeating the truism that premodern hagiographical materials were produced by and for audiences other than us. The manuscripts we can read, and the texts contained in them, are social products of an alien historical context, which, moreover, is accessible to us only through these texts themselves. The information that the original authors and readers of premodern hagiography regarded as valuable differs very substantially from what we expect as the outcome of modern historiography. This variance is my point of departure for developing a scheme that allows us to historicize the material while remaining cognizant of our own commitments.

The process of creating the stories we wish to tell must begin by noting the special characteristics of manuscripts, the material artifacts without which we have no access to the worlds in question. When it comes to Sufi hagiography, distilling the contents of manuscripts into "critical editions" prized by traditional philologists is not the optimal way to approach the material. The notion of a critical edition has come under significant questioning in various fields in recent scholarship, following epistemological investigations of the premises on which it is based. The critical edition reflects an ideology of textuality that presumes a certain form of literary subjectivity as a universal. That is, the possibility of an authoritative critical edition presupposes that a text is always a product of authorial intent that is universal across time and space and that can be recovered through modern philological work. However, in historical terms, the process through which texts come into being is manifestly not the same for all of them; scholars have become increasingly sensitive to the fact that the form and the content of a text are interdependent in ways that are specific to genres.<sup>2</sup> Traditional critical editions create and erase information in equal measure since they marginalize incidental details in order to generate an authoritative version of the text. It is then problematic to regard "editing" as a single and uniform process that is identically appropriate for all premodern textual cultures and must remain the standard for processing manuscripts as the basis of historiographical work. Rather, for arenas such as Sufi hagiography, the surviving manuscripts must be treated as elements of an irreducible archive.

Moving a step beyond basic materiality, the manuscripts available to us contain hagiographical texts. We need to distinguish between manuscripts

2 For a summary treatment of recent scholarly trends in discussions of texts and editing, see David C. Greetham, *Theories of the Text* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

and texts because, in the case of extended hagiography produced in Central Asia, we possess multiple works dedicated to the same figures, each of which usually survives in multiple manuscripts. The manuscripts vary among themselves, and the texts contain a further level of mutual difference. While the texts are framed differently, they contain much of the same didactic and narrative material. Reading across all that is available regarding a single figure (such as Naqshband) can produce a sense of *déjà vu*. However, the seemingly small differences between the manuscripts and the texts are a critical resource for mapping the dynamic sociohistorical situation that led to the production of the material artifacts. Each text represents the work of an author or compiler, who composed it while being cognizant of related predecessor and contemporary texts. Variation between the texts that is revealed through comparative study indexes the moving social world that underlay the production of the surviving textual corpus.

Repetition is a prominent feature of hagiographical works across the literature. The stories and morals one encounters in accounts of Naqshband, for example, are common enough to be found in narratives about other masters not connected to Naqshband's lineage. This fact leads me to posit the notion of a narrative fund, shared across time and space, from which Sufi authors drew while producing hagiographical texts and manuscripts. In addition to accounting for commonality, conceptualizing the presence of a narrative fund allows accounting for perpetual transferences between orality and literacy that are key to this form of narration. Hagiographical texts contain persistent references to compilers hearing reports from others, who are, themselves, said to have heard particular acts or miracles. Yet the written reports we possess conform to literary conventions, and within them we hear of stories being told to individuals and groups in oral form. Imagining a narrative fund that remains alive through oral-written transfers shows Sufis forming a world interconnected through the process of drawing upon a common set of stories and socioreligious ideals.

Ultimately, the hagiographical material I am considering constitutes a genre defined by characteristics that differentiate it from other literary forms. The genre exists across the oral-written divide and allows narratives of vastly different scales. It is distinguished by a set of mostly unstated rules regarding organization, progression of themes, and investment in religious, social, and political ideals. Hagiography is a capacious genre, such that works belonging to it share family resemblances rather than having been dictated to a single definitive pattern. It is also rooted in specific forms of sociality pertaining to the way Sufis imagined the ideal relationship between an all-powerful master

and an acquiescent disciple. The genre's form has an ideological purpose that individual authors match to the task of advancing the interests of specific individuals and communities. Moreover, in context, hagiography competes with other genres such as the political chronicle, where the contestation between literary forms reflects how different powerholders opposed or accommodated each other in societies such as those of premodern Central Asia.

The progression across the four elements of hagiography that I have laid out leads us from the least to the most abstract category. Each of the four aspects becomes more visible as one reads further into the surviving archive. The more manuscripts we have read, the more we become aware of the texts, the narrative fund, and the overall genre instantiated in each surviving witness. While we must proceed from manuscript to genre as modern readers, the process of the production of these texts can be envisioned as working in reverse. Seen from that side, the manuscript comes into being as the result of a sociointellectual process tethered to the lives of the human subjects who are represented in the sources. From that point of view, hagiography as a genre is in the foreground since it is the mold that conditions the way lived human experience glides into linguistic form. This transmission is subject to evolving social conventions that determine the genre's contours. While the genre is an abstraction, it gives rise to the narrative fund of actual stories circulating in oral and written forms. Hagiographical texts signify a further narrowing of the selection, indicating the way generic patterns and stock stories found in the narrative fund come to represent the lives of specific Sufis. The manuscript is, then, the final product of the whole process since it constitutes a witness produced in a specific time and place.

Dividing the reading and production processes into four parts and positing them as inversions in the way I have suggested provides a multifaceted rubric for expanding the possibilities for what we can deduce from hagiographical materials. One key to the inversion is the fact that the two processes have opposing conditions of possibility: for us, the manuscript is the basis on which we infer the texts, the narrative fund, and the genre, while it is the genre and narrative fund that led to the formulation of the text that became material in the form of manuscript at some point in the past. It needs emphasis that, whether we approach the material from the side of reading or production, the four categories are thoroughly interdependent and are nested within each other. In expanding on the four categories with some examples, I proceed in the order from manuscript to genre since this progression pertains to our concrete access to the material. My conceptualization of the way the material was produced is hypothetical, having been gleaned from the process of reading the

sources.<sup>3</sup> With all this in mind, let us now turn to more detailed discussions of the four proposed elements.

### Manuscripts

At the level of manuscripts, the study of Sufi communities in Central Asia faces many of the same issues as other fields that depend on the understanding of premodern literary cultures. In cases where there is a single manuscript of a work that survives, determining how it should be read can be difficult because of uniqueness of the style, calligraphic hand, etc., and lack of supporting context. But equally significant complications surface when we have multiple manuscripts of a single work. As in the case of other premodern codices, simply reproducing multiple manuscripts without any editorial intervention does not further the cause of making the work better known. Reading manuscripts requires significant investments of time and effort, which only a few scholars have the luxury to make.

Manuscripts contain visual markings and physical contextual clues such as marginalia, dating, stamps, histories of travel, etc., that are either lost in the process of preparing the text for printed presentation, or have to be represented through cumbersome apparatuses. Furthermore, the preparation of editions requires decisions pertaining to the form of the modern book that sit awkwardly with respect to the evidence. For example, in the case where we have multiple manuscripts for a work, the two extreme options are either to have the main text consist only of material common to all manuscripts (that is, only that which overlaps in all instantiations), or to include all non-repetitive material that can be culled from the various witnesses. In both cases, the result is a new text, which dissembles from the contents of any one of the individual source manuscripts. In practice, of course, editors walk a middle line between these extremes, with the ending edition being a new text that is a product of their judgments.<sup>4</sup>

3 In thinking about how best to approach Sufi hagiographical texts I have benefitted from the perspective of the movement known as "genetic criticism." Most work in this vein has been concerned with modern European literary manuscripts but I find that some of the analytical issues that have guided it can help for other fields as well. For details of the history and practice of genetic criticism see Jed Deppman, Daniel Ferrer, and Michael Groden, eds., *Genetic Criticism: Texts and Avant-textes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

4 Looking to the future, texts published in an electronic format may have the ability to collate and maintain information from multiple manuscripts in a single interface. It remains to be seen whether Central Asian Sufi hagiography is of enough interest to scholars to warrant the expenditure of financial and technological resources that would be necessary to bring such

A kind of summary point for thinking about the difference between a manuscript and a printed edition is that a manuscript is a "situated" object whereas a printed edition comes to exist in numerous identical copies available to multiple readers simultaneously. Every manuscript is a unique product of a time and a place, whose traces it alone carries. We may not be able to decipher or recover a manuscript's originating situation but we can be certain that it was critical for the artifact to have come into being. A printed book that contains an edition, in comparison, bears different sorts of markings that pertain to the sociology of modern scholarship and book production. Ultimately, then, producing editions never fully absolves us from the necessity of learning about and utilizing manuscripts in our work. Even when we do rely on modern editions, including those with excellent references for variants among witnesses, we can be certain that looking at the manuscripts would yield additional information.<sup>5</sup>

Issues in the consideration of a single item are exemplified in a manuscript of a work dedicated to Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband that is currently held at the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library in Patna, India. The manuscript makes no mention of the author but gives the name of the work contained within it as *Anīs al-tālibīn va 'uddat al-sālikīn*.<sup>6</sup> As discussed below in greater detail, this name occurs at the head of numerous texts containing Naqshband's saintly life, and we must regard the manuscript as part of a class of texts. What is most interesting about the manuscript is that it states that 'Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī (d. 1492), famous poet and author of numerous Sufi works, transcribed the text, completing the task of copying on Jumādā 1, 856 (May 20, 1452).<sup>7</sup> Paleographical analysis assigns high probability to the idea that the handwriting matches that of other texts bearing Jāmī's name as the copyist. While the text follows the general sequence of topics as found in other versions of works that bear the

texts into existence. For examples of what may be possible in this sphere, see Jonas Carlquist, "Medieval Manuscripts, Hypertext and Reading: Visions of Digital Editions," *Literary and Linguistic Computing*, 19 (2004), no. 1, 105–118.

5 For an extended discussion of the significance of the difference between manuscripts and printed texts in the vein I am highlighting see Bernard Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology*, tr. Betsy Wing (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

6 Anonymous, *Anīs al-tālibīn va 'uddat al-sālikīn*, Ms. Persian 1377, Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna, India, 1b.

7 Ibid., colophon (folios are not numbered).

same name, the specific materials contained here represent a selection that the editor of the manuscript has designated an abridgement (*khulāṣa*).<sup>8</sup>

Although it is impossible to be definitive about the authenticity of the attribution to Jāmī, this codex is nevertheless useful for the sake of illustrating the historiographical value of a manuscript. The most interesting aspect in this instance, however, is what the manuscript may convey about Jāmī rather than Naqshband, the work's ostensible subject. The date on the manuscript corresponds closely to the time at which Jāmī is thought to have joined a Naqshbandī circle in Herat, affiliating himself with Sufis among the scholarly classes.<sup>9</sup> The text contained in the manuscript matches what scholars have referred to as the shorter redaction of the work *Anīs al-tālibīn va 'uddat al-sālikīn*.<sup>10</sup> The possibility that the attribution to Jāmī is authentic is corroborated by the fact that two other manuscripts of this redaction of *Anīs al-tālibīn*, now in Tashkent and St. Petersburg respectively, bear a genetic relationship to the text copied by Jāmī.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to the date, the contents of this version of the *Anīs al-tālibīn* provide contextual support for Jāmī having been the redactor.<sup>12</sup> For instance,

8 For details of these issues see the editor's introduction in 'Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī, *Khulāṣa-yi anīs al-tālibīn*, ed. Muḥammad Zākir Ḥusayn (Patna: Khuda Bakhsh Library, 1994), vii–xi.

9 See Hamid Algar, "Jāmī ii. and Sufism," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, q.v.; Ertuğrul Ökten, "Jāmī (817–898/1414–1492): His Biography and Intellectual Influence in Herat," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 2007, 75–78. The original sources do not provide an exact date for Jāmī's affiliation to the Naqshbandiyya. Its placement in the early 1450s is a matter of reconstruction by modern scholars.

10 See Alexey Khismatulin, "Jāmī's Statement on the Authorship of the *Anīs al-tālibīn*," in *Jāmī and the Intellectual History of the Muslim World: The Trans-Regional Reception of 'Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī's Works, c. 9th/15th–14th/20th*, edited by Thibaut d'Hubert and Alexandre Papas (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming). I am grateful to Dr. Khismatulin for advance access to this work.

11 For the manuscript now in Tashkent see Devin DeWeese, "The Legitimation of Baha' ad-Din Naqshband," *Asiatische Studien/Études Asiatiques* 60, no. 2 (2006), 274 (note 25). The manuscript in St. Petersburg is discussed in detail in Khismatulin, "Jāmī's Statement on the Authorship of the *Anīs al-tālibīn*," forthcoming.

12 Khismatulin's detailed consideration of manuscripts of this work differs from my interpretation on this score. He argues that the Patna manuscript is a kind of rough draft made by Jāmī early in life while the St. Petersburg manuscript, a fuller and correctly arranged version of the text, reveals that this work as well as the longer version of *Anīs al-tālibīn* were composed by Naqshband's disciple and famous author Khwāja Muḥammad Pārsā. He is said to have done so on the instigation of 'Alā al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār (d. 1400), Naqshband's successor, who exercised authority over Pārsā after Naqshband's death. While a full

this rendering of Naqshband's life is a considerably more "rationalized" text than the longer versions; it would likely have appealed more to someone with a scholarly background. Its presentation of encounters between Naqshband and his associates has the tendency to remove incidental details and to concentrate on the point or moral of the story. Similarly, the arrangement of stories reflects choices of members of the scholarly class. In all redactions of *Anīs al-tālibīn*, the fourth section is dedicated to Naqshband's charismatic acts (*karāmāt*) and circumstances and effects (*aḥvāl va āsār*) associated with his life. In the shorter redaction, possibly copied by Jāmī and others, this section begins by noting the time when none of the scholars (*ulamā*) of Bukhara had attached themselves to Naqshband. One day, Naqshband exchanged pleasantries with a scholar named Ḥusām al-Dīn Khwāja Yūsuf (d. 768/1366–67) and his entourage in the street and later told his disciples that this man would be the first member of the scholarly class to attach himself to Naqshband's community.<sup>13</sup> The "miracle" then was that this is exactly what came to pass. In the published longer work also known as the *Anīs al-tālibīn*, which is based on comparing fourteen manuscripts, the fourth section begins with a story about Naqshband's miraculous knowledge about a disciple's movement, and the account of his encounter with Ḥusām al-Dīn occurs considerably later in the section.<sup>14</sup>

The variability between the contents and placements of stories relating to Naqshband in different hagiographical compilations is part of a general complex that I will discuss in the section on texts below. My exploration of specific details of the manuscript attributed to Jāmī's hand is admittedly a bare beginning of a worthwhile examination. However, my point is to illustrate why the "situatedness" of manuscripts is a matter of historiographical interest. If we

discussion of this argument is not germane to the topic of the present essay, I hesitate to concur because it requires us to presume many things about Jāmī's attitudes and scholarly practices, as well as the relationship between him and Pārsā and 'Aṭṭār. We generally have scant evidence for such matters concerning Sufi groups such as the early Naqshbandis. My preference, then, is to take Khismatulin's detailed philological discussion as further evidence for the complicated relationship between manuscripts and texts when it comes to the hagiographical corpus connected to Naqshband (Khismatulin, "Jāmī's Statement on the Authorship of the *Anīs al-tālibīn*," forthcoming).

13 Jāmī, *Khulāṣa-yi anīs al-tālibīn*, 22–23; Khwāja Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad, *Anīs al-tālibīn va 'uddat al-sālikīn*, Ms. e. 37, Bodleian Library, Oxford, 85b–86a. Khismatulin identifies this scholar as Khwāja Pārsā's paternal uncle, which is part of his argument that Pārsā was the text's author (Khismatulin, "Jāmī's Statement on the Authorship of the *Anīs al-tālibīn*," forthcoming).

14 Ṣalāḥ b. Muḥarak Bukhārī, *Anīs al-tālibīn va 'uddat al-sālikīn*, ed. Khalīl Ibrāhīm Ṣārīoghlu (Tehran: Kayhān, 1992), 162, 183–84.



take the scribal attribution seriously, it provides an important detail about Jāmī that corresponds to what we know from other sources about a critical juncture in his life. Expanding from this, the copying of a hagiography by someone like Jāmī may indicate that the reproduction of such texts was a pious exercise through which new initiates affirmed the group's understanding of its past. If we doubt the attribution of the manuscript to Jāmī, we arrive at the possibility of forgery and other equally interesting questions about the milieu in which the manuscript was produced. What circumstances may have led an author to sign the manuscript with Jāmī's name rather than his own? Undertaken in a comprehensive manner along these lines, the examination of incidental details in a significant number of hagiographical manuscripts adds to our understanding of Central Asian Sufi communities.

### Texts

As the discussion so far indicates, the availability of multiple accounts of a single figure is a characteristic of Central Asian hagiography that is a major resource for understanding Sufi communities. Multiple versions of the life of a single figure raise evaluative challenges that have as much to do with assessing the positions of compilers and scribes as those of the saintly subjects. A prominent issue in this regard is the way specific texts are framed, including matters such as authorial intent, the relationship between the author and the subject(s), information regarding the text's sponsorship (that is, if the author claims to be writing based on someone's request), and the information we gather by comparing texts to note inclusions and exclusions. Central Asian texts of this nature include those dedicated to such major figures as Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband, Sayyid 'Alī Hamadānī (d. 1385),<sup>15</sup> Shāh Nī'matullāh Walī (d. 1431),<sup>16</sup> Sayyid Muḥammad Nūrbakhsh (d. 1464),<sup>17</sup> Khwāja 'Ubaydullāh

<sup>15</sup> See Devin DeWeese, "Sayyid 'Alī Hamadani and Kubrawi Hagiographical Traditions," in *Studies on Sufism in Central Asia* (Burlington, Vermont: Variorum, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> See Jean Aubin, ed. *Matériaux pour la biographie de Shāh Nī'matullāh Walī Kermānī* (Tehran: Institut Français d'Iranologie de Téhéran, 1956).

<sup>17</sup> See Shahzad Bashir, *Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions: The Nūrbakhshīya Between Medieval and Modern Islam* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003).

Ahrār (d. 1490),<sup>18</sup> Husayn Khwārazmī (d. 1551),<sup>19</sup> Makhdūm-i A'zam Kāsānī Dahbīdī (d. 1542),<sup>20</sup> and Khwāja Muḥammad Islām Jūybārī (d. 1563) and his influential descendants.<sup>21</sup>

To focus on Naqshband again, we can divide hagiographical notices on him into three categories that project different overall views of his life despite having much in common.<sup>22</sup> The categories are: 1. Works by disciples who were Naqshband's companions; 2. Extended collections of hagiographical stories produced in the first few generations after Naqshband's death; and 3. Subsidiary notices in later works by Naqshbandī authors as well as others who comment on Naqshband's life while pursuing other matters as their main intent.

The first category includes works such as Ya'qūb Charkhī's *Kitāb-i maqāmāt va silsila-yi Naqshbandī*, and Khwāja Muḥammad Pārsā's *Risāla-yi qudsiyya*. In Charkhī's work, the figures of Naqshband and the author are inextricably interlaced and the narrative attempts to convey a sense for the master's charisma. Charkhī writes that he began to serve Naqshband after receiving an indication from God (*qabūl-i ilāhī*) while he was near the shrine of Sayf al-Dīn Bākhārī in Bukhara. Upon approaching, he found out that the master welcomed him because of his knowledge of the divine gift he had received. Subsequently, Charkhī was asked to undertake travel to spread the knowledge he had acquired. When he received the news of Naqshband's death while in Kīsh, he

<sup>18</sup> See 'Arif Nawshāhī, ed., *Ahvāl va sukhānān-i Khwāja 'Ubaydullāh Ahrār* (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Dānishgāhī, 2001); Jo-Ann Gross, "Khoja Ahrar: A Study of the Perceptions of Religious Power and Prestige in the Late Timurid Period," Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1982.

<sup>19</sup> See Devin DeWeese, "The Eclipse of the Kubrāviyah in Central Asia," *Studies on Sufism in Central Asia* (Burlington, Vermont: Variorum, 2012), 25–34.

<sup>20</sup> See Victoria R. Gardner, "The Written Representations of a Central Asian Sufi Shaykh: Ahmad ibn Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Khwājagī Kāsānī 'Makhdūm-i A'zam' (d. 1542)," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 2006 and Bakhtiyar Babadjanov, "Biographies of Makhdūm-i A'zam al-Kāsānī al-Dahbīdī, Shaykh of the Sixteenth-century Naqshbandiyya," *Manuscripta Orientalia* 5/2 (1999), 3–8.

<sup>21</sup> See Florian Schwarz, "*Unser Weg schließt tausend Wege ein*": *Derwische und Gesellschaft im islamischen Mittelasien im 16. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2000). This work contains discussions of numerous masters and families.

<sup>22</sup> For detailed considerations of the narratives and their underpinnings see DeWeese, "The Legitimation of Baha' ad-Din Naqshband" and Jürgen Paul, *Doctrine and Organization: The Khwajagan/Naqshbandiyya in the First Generation after Baha'uddin* (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 1998).

became apprehensive that this would leave him bereft of direct instruction. But Naqshband then began to appear in his dreams to guide him.<sup>23</sup>

Cumulatively, Charkhī's work is a Sufi doctrinal tract concerned with ablations, the performance of ritual prayer and *zikr*, and the general properties associated with Sufi saints (*awlīyā*). Naqshband occurs in the initial framing of the narrative and then at various points as an authoritative voice pronouncing on various matters. The work concentrates on providing a sense for the bond between Naqshband and his disciples rather than describing the circumstances of his life. A similar tendency is noticeable in the *Risāla-yi qudsīyya*, attributed to Khwāja Muḥammad Pārsā (d. 1420), another direct disciple. Pārsā's fame stems from his extensive literary output that evinces great knowledge of Islamic literature, including works by Sufis. This work does not contain a description of the personal relationship between the author and Naqshband; instead, Pārsā states at the very beginning that: "for the people of spiritual sight (*ahl-i baṣīrat*), the certitude that comes from ruminating on the discourse of this group [i.e. Sufis] is stronger and superior to the certitude that comes from seeing miraculous events (*khavāriq-i ādāt*)."<sup>24</sup> The author then follows this directive to the effect that the work consists of religious teachings coming from the mouths of Naqshband and others. Between Charkhī and Pārsā, we get the sense that preserving Naqshband's teachings, rather than giving a verbal portrayal of his physical presence in front of disciples, was the most pressing concern for his immediate disciples.

The second category of texts concerning Naqshband are collections with emphasis on stories of Naqshband's progress on the Sufi path, his becoming a great figure, and his interactions with a myriad of disciples. The most commonly found text of this type is the *Anīs al-tālibīn va 'uddat al-sālikīn*, which exists in two redactions as I have described above. In the longer version, the author identifies himself as Ṣalāḥ b. Mubārak al-Bukhārī, who arrived in the service of Naqshband's disciple 'Alā al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār (d. 1400) in the year 785/1383–84. He came to know Naqshband through the intermediacy of 'Aṭṭār, who asked him to collect materials about Naqshband after the great master had passed away in 1389. According to Bukhārī, Naqshband had interdicted the writing

23 Ya'qūb Charkhī, *Kitāb-i maqāmāt va silsila-yi Naqshbandī*, Ms. e. 37, Bodleian Library, Oxford, 146b–147b. A version of this work has been published together with an Urdu translation: Ya'qūb Charkhī, *Risāla-yi unsiyya*, ed. and tr. Muḥammad Nazīr Rānjhā (Dera Ismail Khan, Pakistan: Maktaba Sirājiyya Khānaqāh-i Aḥmadiyya Sa'idiyya, 1983).

24 Khwāja Muḥammad Pārsā, *Risāla-yi qudsīyya (Kalimāt-i Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband)*, ed. Aḥmad Ṭahīrī 'Irāqī (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi Ṭahūrī, 1975), 3.

down of his life while he had been alive.<sup>25</sup> The shorter redaction of this work differs on the following points: it does not mention an author, presents the stories in a different arrangement, and omits some stories present in the longer version while also containing others that are not found in the work attributed to Bukhārī.<sup>26</sup>

As Devin DeWeese and Jürgen Paul have shown, the two redactions of *Anīs al-tālibīn* must be placed in the same textual field as two other surviving works that share much in common with them.<sup>27</sup> These are: the *Risāla-yi Bahā'īyya* attributed to Abū'l-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Mas'ūd Bukhārī, and the anonymous *Khavāriq-i Naqshband dar 'ilm-i sayr*.<sup>28</sup> When they speak in their own voices, the narrators of these compilations describe themselves as fulfilling requests made by Naqshband's disciples. Their choices to include or exclude materials, as well as the lessons they say must be learned from Naqshband's life, are thus tied to the interests of Naqshband's successors. These compilations are also the most extensive works on Naqshband's life. Their comprehensive approach, seemingly aimed at preserving all relevant details, is logical for those whose spiritual as well as sociopolitical impulses were geared toward a kind of "canonization" of the illustrious friend of God. These narratives have principally furnished the picture of Naqshband's life that we find in later pre-modern Sufi sources as well as in modern reconstructions.<sup>29</sup>

25 Bukhārī, *Anīs al-tālibīn va 'uddat al-sālikīn*, 66–67.

26 Khismatulīn argues that "Ṣalāḥ b. Mubārak" is a pseudonym and that Khwāja Pārsā was the author of the *Risāla-yi qudsīyya* as well as both texts known as *Anīs al-tālibīn* (Khismatulīn, "Jāmi's Statement on the Authorship of the *Anīs al-tālibīn*," forthcoming). Besides the issue that the evidence seems circumstantial rather than definitive, I am unsure about the analytical significance of regarding Pārsā as the author. Ultimately, the texts are quite different and indicate multiple verbal portraits of Naqshband irrespective of who created them. The textual diversity seems more consequential than purported authorship.

27 Cf. DeWeese, "The Legitimation of Baha' ad-Din Naqshband"; Paul, *Doctrine and Organization*.

28 Abū'l-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Mas'ūd Bukhārī, *Risāla-yi Bahā'īyya fī maqāmāt-i Ḥazrat Khwāja Bahā' al-Dīn*, Ms. 287.7/5 (Fārsī Ṭaṣavvuf), Subhanullah Collection, Maulana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India, 1b–84a; Anonymous, *Khavāriq-i Naqshband dar 'ilm-i sayr*, Persian Ms. 844, Salar Jung Estate Library (Oriental Collection), Hyderabad, India, 1b–64b.

29 Two important works in this regard are 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmi, *Nafaḥāt al-uns min ḥazarat al-quds*, ed. Maḥmūd 'Ābidī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Ittīlā'āt, 1997), 389–394, and Fakhr al-Dīn 'Alī b. Ḥusayn Kāshifī Ṣafī, *Rashahāt-i 'ayn al-ḥayāt*, ed. 'Alī Aṣghar Mu'iniyān, 2 vols. (Tehran: Majmū'a-yi Mutūn-i Qadīm va Ahvāl-i Dānishmandān va 'Irfānān, 1977), 1:95–101. To date, the most extensive account of Naqshband's life, written in a devotional

The third and last category of texts that deserves mention in this context includes works that are not devoted to Naqshband. Rather, they comment on him because of a relationship between him and other individuals who are the main subjects of the works. Perhaps the most important such work is Shihāb al-Dīn's *Maqāmāt-i Amīr Kulāl*, anchored in narratives about Sayyid Amīr Kulāl (d. 1370–71), who acted as Naqshband's master and whose legacy gave rise to a familial tradition that was a rival to Naqshband's disciples in Central Asia. This work was written by a great-grandson of Amīr Kulāl, likely contemporaneously with the production of works such as *Anīs al-tālibīn*. It presents Naqshband as a petulant and haughty disciple to Amīr Kulāl, reflecting both a probable constrained relationship between the master and disciple, and the rivalry between Amīr Kulāl's descendants and the Naqshbandis as a group rapidly gaining influence in Central Asia during the 15th century.

Shihāb al-Dīn states that once while in Amīr Kulāl's company, Naqshband thought to himself that perhaps he was the closest disciple to the master. Just then Amīr Kulāl was presented a sheep and Naqshband reflected to himself that it would have been advantageous if another disciple, named Mawlānā 'Arif, had been present to prepare a meal from the animal. Intuiting the thought based on his insight into disciples' minds, Amīr Kulāl then asked Naqshband to call 'Arif to come to do the job. Naqshband objected that there was no way 'Arif could hear a call since he was in a village at quite some distance. When Amīr Kulāl insisted, Naqshband went outside and called the man three times. He appeared on the scene immediately, leading Amīr Kulāl to admonish Naqshband that the other man was closer to him and that it was better for him to concentrate on his own work and actions rather than setting up comparisons.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, in another story, Amīr Kulāl's foot once landed on Naqshband's head. This made the master proclaim that this meant that the rest of the world would come under Naqshband's feet. The narrator then interjects that from that moment on, Naqshband's star began to rise in the world.<sup>31</sup> In this instance, Naqshband's success is made contingent on Amīr Kulāl's approval, delivered in a way that demeans the disciple.

The three categories of texts, each with multiple manuscripts, that I have illustrated through reference to the life of Naqshband highlight the complexities involved in assessing materials associated with major Central Asian Sufi

rather than critical spirit, is Necdet Tosun, *Bahâeddin Nakşebend: Hayatı, Görüşleri, Tarikatı* (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2002).

30 Shihāb al-Dīn, *Maqāmāt-i Amīr Kulāl*, Ms. C1562, Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint-Petersburg Branch, Institute of Oriental Studies, 25a–b.

31 Ibid., 33b.

figures. The various sources share much in common, and what appears to us today as repetition symptomizes continuities among the various works. However, authors also deploy the same morals and stories for divergent ends, allowing us to notice matters such as rivalries and shifts in ideologies and practices. In this material as elsewhere, the sources' contents provide information not simply through the plain linguistic meaning but via placement, inclusion and exclusion, and explicit and implicit ways in which the narrative leads from a story to its purported lesson. The multiplicity of categories and contents of works, together with the fact that these works exist in many manuscripts that differ from each other, make hagiographical literature a rich and intricate source base for writing Central Asian history.

### Narrative Fund

To a large degree, the notion of a narrative fund is prefigured in what I have already said about the issue of internal variation between manuscripts and texts. At the base level, such a fund includes the collectivity of all that we can substantiate from different sources on Sufi figures and groups active in Central Asia. But it is important to theorize the presence of a narrative fund separately from manuscripts and texts for two interrelated reasons. First, the transition between the narrative fund and texts encompasses the very significant issue of transfers between oral narratives and written texts. And second, the narrative fund idea helps account for hagiography's nature as a highly stylized recounting of the past that conveys universal claims through the citation of particularities.

Hagiographical texts consist mainly of vignettes that narrate interactions between a saintly figure and a person or a group who receives teachings, censure, material rewards, or punishment. Whether represented as being customary or highly dramatic, these exchanges are narrated in the voices of individuals who purport to have observed the interactions in person. As in the case of *ḥadīth*, oral transmission is a central component in hagiographical stories' claims of truth and authenticity. What the reader experiences in these texts is not a seamless narrative of the life of a friend of God, but constant interjection of situational data, such as names of people and places and the circumstances of a given incident. The result is a text that comes across as trying to retain its oral antecedent as much as possible.

The privileging of the oral is central to hagiography and reflects the social context from which the texts originate, which they are attempting to represent, and in which they were utilized. The hagiographer's purpose is to take

the reader to the saintly person's physical presence in specific moments in time. Hagiographical texts are not random conglomerations of vignettes but instantiations of a sophisticated form that aims to produce intimacy between the reader and the subject. They attempt to recreate, through text, the ideal relationship between master and disciple that is supposed to be based on love and the acknowledgement of total dependence in exchange for protection and spiritual as well as worldly provision. The preservation of the oral context within the literary form also renders the narratives readily consumable in later situations of personal contact. In effect, the preservation of the oral frame within written text allows it to be carried back seamlessly into live performance.

While a hagiographical text presents incidents in the life of a master as unique occurrences, reading multiple texts we see constant repetition of patterns. In fact, reading across the genre can be a tedious affair since one sees the same stories and lessons again and again. Although the material is repeated among texts, lineage groups, and large spans of time, it is domesticated to local contexts in each immediate case through citing names of witnesses and places. The evocation of orality in hagiography is thus not something to be taken on face value alone. Orality is a literary trope that allows hagiographical narrators to conjoin universal themes in the representation of saintly figures to the particularities of the lives of their immediate subjects. A given narrative's efficacy eventually depends on the hagiographer's skill in maintaining a balance between themes from the narrative fund on the one hand and quotidian details of a human life observed in the flesh on the other. Overemphasis on either side can dissipate the narrative's purpose since, on one side, a figure simply re-performing the acts of earlier exemplars begins to appear like an automaton, and on the other, a narrative about a human life pure and simple fails to advance the advertising and didactic purposes of the hagiographical text.

Considering extant Persian hagiographical literature from the 14th and 15th century as a narrative fund, I have elsewhere offered a cultural history of Sufi communities through a focus on topics that repeat most frequently in the stories. Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband is a major figure in my account of this social world, appearing in discussions pertaining to the typical life-cycle of the Sufi master, and in miracles where the saint is able to be present in multiple locations at the same time, protects the bodies of disciples dedicated to him, and grants food and children to supplicants.<sup>32</sup> My work in this vein stemmed from observing that hagiographical narratives pay very close attention to corporeal matters that are, themselves, effects of an overall sociointellectual system centered on properties associated with the great Sufi masters. This approach led

me to suggest that the body was regarded as a doorway that connected apparent (*zāhir*) and hidden (*bāṭin*) aspects of reality that Sufis took for granted as constituting the structure of the cosmos. Within the details of the stories, I identified that hagiographical authors attend especially to rituals, social hierarchies, love and desire, and saints' ability to perform miracles. Rather than tracing matters within texts associated with a specific community, chapters on these topics in my book deliberately collate material from texts and paintings with diverse origins. My point in doing this was to argue that, taken as a narrative fund, hagiographical literature symptomizes a powerful social imagination that held sway over multiple spheres in premodern Central Asia and Iran. Sufi manuscripts and texts that survive for us are all anchored in this narrative fund common to the milieu across specific communities.

Positing the notion of a narrative fund as a distinct element within the context of hagiography highlights the combination of literary and social processes that form the backdrop for this type of material. The manuscripts and texts at our disposal are not products of scriptoria geared toward producing philologically standardized versions of the life histories of Sufi masters. On the contrary, internal variation is fundamental to the social context from which these texts emerge and must be taken as a given for our analyses. However, these texts are not simply free-floating descriptions of individuals either. They are highly typological and attempt to tie individual lives to universalizing patterns. They draw on reservoirs of idealized lives ranging between *ḥadīth*, *sīra*, lives of prophets, and the constantly expanding repertoire of Sufi hagiography. The existing narrative fund of stories and morals validates the content of a given manuscript or work by providing the good tale that enlivens the storyteller's yarn and anchors it in the identitarian and sociocultural concerns of the historical setting.

## Genre

As in the case of previous categories, the question of genre is prefigured in the issues I have discussed up to now. Some of what I have suggested under the rubric of the narrative fund clearly applies to the way we might define extended Sufi hagiography as a genre. However, I am making a distinction between the two categories to highlight hagiography's thematic characteristics at the most general level.

In the basic sense, Sufi hagiography is best described as an argument for sanctity made on behalf of a friend of God by her or his disciples. It is a close cognate to the genre of chronicle, replacing God's friend or the Sufi *silṣila* for a

32 Bashir, *Sufi Bodies*, 89–90, 171–72, 174–76, 196–97, 199–200.

royal personage or dynasty. It is highly didactic but its religious message is conveyed through dramatizations of relationships between human beings rather than direct exhortation involving God or other purely metaphysical beings. It also shares much in common with storytelling genres, intermixing prose and poetry in a way that is common for medieval Islamic belletristic literature.

Beyond these basics, it is significant to consider how a hagiographical narrative produces its distinctive affect that separates it from other genres. In my view, a large part of hagiography's narrative success derives from the tension inherent in bestowing intense glorification on the saintly figure, a subject whose claim to distinction is that s/he does not care to be glorified. This tension, which is endemic to Sufism as a religious system, generates compelling stories with multiple levels of meaning. It provides the narrator the opportunity to build any amount of dramatic description, which a properly prepared reader knows to understand both as straightforward portrayal and, simultaneously, its very antithesis. For instance, descriptions of Sufis' severe hardships and poverty imply both their proper choice and the fact that they are the ones who are truly rich because of the rewards they await based on their relationship with the divine. In the opposite vein, when subjects are described as powerful and resplendent in worldly ways, the reader is supposed to know that they really care not at all about such matters because of their dedication to religious aims. Neither outward poverty nor excessive worldly trappings are thus the true measure of a Sufi, although the hagiographical narrator is at liberty to use both to any extent for the sake of the narrative's efficacy.

The structure and the distribution of contents of the larger version of the *Anīs al-tālibīn va 'uddat al-sālikīn*, a work dedicated to Naqshband that I have discussed above, further illustrate hagiography's qualities as a genre. The author, Ṣalāḥ b. Mubārak al-Bukhārī, claims to be working on the request of Naqshband's successors, who wished to preserve knowledge about him after his death. Disciples' desire for the master forms the genre's frame and determines the type of information to be included in it.<sup>33</sup> Subsequently, the work is divided into four very unequal parts. Bukhārī begins by defining the saint (*valī*) and sainthood (*valāyat*), citing Sufi theory as well as metaphors such as the notion that the acts and benefits that issue from the saint are like shadows cast by divine light when it shines on the saint's body.<sup>34</sup> The second section, which at ten percent of the work is about twice as long as the first, describes circumstances that prevailed before Naqshband's birth and what occurred in his childhood and youth. We hear about his ancestors and spiritual predecessors,

33 Bukhārī, *Anīs al-tālibīn va 'uddat al-sālikīn*, 66.

34 Ibid., 71.

who legitimate him as someone destined for greatness before even being conceived in his mother's body. The key distinguishing feature of the material presented in this section is that Naqshband is not yet a Sufi master in his own right and receives direction from guides who are either living or appear to him in visions. The section ends by recounting Naqshband's initiation into the Khwājagānī chain of Sufi authority, a moment that is critical for establishing his socioreligious credentials.<sup>35</sup> Taken together, the first two sections of the work are, respectively, the theoretical and the historical bedrocks of hagiography as a genre.

The work's third section is about as long as the first two combined (fifteen percent of the text) and presents a summary picture of Naqshband's sayings and customary actions. The focus is on Naqshband's own person, describing his attitude to different types of people, his likes and dislikes, and aphorisms attributed to him.<sup>36</sup> The fourth section is the longest (about seventy percent of the work) and presents Naqshband as a religious and social commander working amongst disciples seeking his favor and guidance. This is where we see the saint in full bloom, acting to protect and provide for his followers while also admonishing and punishing his opponents.<sup>37</sup>

As this brief description of *Anīs al-tālibīn* illustrates, a hagiography's purpose is to create a time and a space for the subject whose argument for sanctity it wishes to push forward. The narrator accomplishes this through constant toggling between universal and particular references. At one level, every saintly life exhibits the same set of standard features, which the narrator substantiates in the theoretical sections and then deploys through invoking themes found in the narrative fund I have discussed above. The key sources for the hagiographical mold range between the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, and various genres of saintly lives such as prophets, Imāms, and earlier Sufis. A further "universalizing" element in these narratives is the use of Persian poetry, which has a distinctive voice of its own and works to imbue the narratives with emotion, passion, and hyperbole. While these elements are ubiquitous, they are thoroughly interlaced together with the quotidian and the particular pertaining to lived human experience. Incidental details of specific actions and encounters with named individuals are important for domesticating the generic stories. The resulting discourse is simultaneously an instantiation of a universal paradigm and the account of a life that is relatable to the reader's lived experience because of consistent appeal to humanizing details. In the final instance, hagiography as

35 Ibid., 79–115.

36 Ibid., 115–162.

37 Ibid., 162–386.

a genre constitutes a flexible framework that can be populated by stories traceable to the hagiographical narrative fund. Each hagiographical text is the actuation of a subset of possibilities allowed by the genre, placed in a determined sequence to further the saintly claim of a Sufi exemplar. And every manuscript we can scrutinize represents the instantiation of a text, the narrative fund, and the genre at a given time and place.

### Conclusion

Sufi hagiographical works are among the most valuable resources we possess to understand premodern Central Asia. They provide information on topics such as biographies of major figures, the establishment and transformation of communities, the rise and evolution of intellectual trends, and Sufis' place among the society's elites. However, these works are very far from being transparent windows onto the past. They are effects of a social world that is encoded within hagiography as a literary form. To utilize these works for modern historiographical reconstruction requires that we unpack them to hypothesize the conditions that gave rise to them and to derive information from their contents, structures, and aporia. I have suggested that we evaluate hagiographical literature by treating manuscripts, texts, a narrative fund, and the literary genre as interrelated but distinguishable loci for analysis. My proposed disaggregation expands interpretive possibilities beyond what is deducible from straightforward perusal.

Examining materials that inform us about the life of Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband illustrates the outcomes of my approach. Naqshband has been a subject for Sufi hagiographical narration for more than six centuries, from immediately after his death to our own day. For the premodern period, our primary material witnesses for claims about Naqshband's life are "manuscripts" that contain compilations of reports regarding his sayings and actions. Each of these manuscripts is a unique object marked by the times and places where it was produced and has been utilized over the centuries. All these objects have their own stories to tell that splice Naqshband's life to the lives of the objects' producers and users. A manuscript attributed to the hand of a specific person such as 'Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī informs us about how Naqshband's life story remained a potent example for those who attached themselves to his lineage.

In the centuries after Naqshband's death, his successors split into factions that competed among themselves as well as with other Sufi lineages. We can map this aspect of Naqshband's story by noting differences between

compilations of anecdotes pertaining to Naqshband that sometimes vary by names and at others by versions assigned the same name. These are the hagiographical "texts" that I distinguish from the category of manuscripts. Among Sufis, the exemplarity of Naqshband's life rested in its similarity to the lives of others regarded as saints rather than his uniqueness. Virtually all reports describing his powers and attitudes can be found echoed in hagiographies devoted to other Sufis. Taken together, these stories constitute a "narrative fund" that we can conceptualize as an abstraction that was shared across the world of premodern Sufis. And finally, Naqshband's hagiography is almost all that we know about him: for historiographical purposes, the saint is coterminous with the changing and evolving narratives about his life found in our archive. The "genre" hagiography consists of the range of patterns and possibilities that instantiate the Sufi past. Manuscripts, texts, and the narrative fund subsumed under the genre are central to any claims we can make about premodern Sufi communities.

Naqshband is one among dozens of Central Asian Sufi masters who were made subjects of hagiographical narration by their followers. Stories about other figures sometimes intersect with those of Naqshband and his followers and at other times diverge in important ways. Multiply what I have said regarding Naqshband many times and we can have a sense for the wealth of information contained in hagiography. Imbued with religious ideology and miracles, hagiographical narratives become most valuable for our purposes when we see them as symptoms of social worlds rather than as straightforward statements informing us about what happened in the past. The interpretive scheme I have presented in this article aims at a systematic approach to this task.

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