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SUFISM AND ETHICS IN CENTRAL ASIA: SŪFĪ ALLĀHYĀR'S THABĀT AL-‘ĀJIZĪN AND ITS LEGACY

Alexandre Papas

It is fairly well-known that, alongside the theoretical discussions on the virtues and their spiritual meanings, historically speaking, Sufis have produced a wide range of writings dealing with the everyday morality and concerns of pious Muslims. Although “the popularization of the moral vision of Sufism” has taken place,¹ these writings have been perhaps more influential than Sufi theoretical treatises. Using relatively simple language with straightforward statements and illustrative narratives, these writings were rooted in daily practical wisdom rather than theology or metaphysics. In early modern and modern Central Asia, Šūfī Allāhyār, who was a Naqshbandī Mujaddidī, particularly distinguished himself in this respect. His most famous work, entitled *Thabāt al-‘ājjizīn* (Strengthening the weak), is a didactic treatise in *mathnawī* form. The book, composed in Turkic verses, includes explanatory sections (*bayān*) and didactic tales (*ḥikāyat*) along with a few supplication poems in which Šūfī Allāhyār discusses the articles of faith, observances, morals, and ethics from a Sufi perspective and in a rather austere tone. It is the form as much as the contents that explains the immense popularity of the *Thabāt al-‘ājjizīn* in Central Eurasian madrasas from the eighteenth century onwards, making the treatise something of a Sufi digest for Turkic-speaking Muslim youth.

1. To use Paul Heck's expression in his article "Mysticism as Morality: The Case of Sufism," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 34, no. 2 (2006): 253–286.

In this paper, I present the author and his writings, focusing on the *Thabāt al-‘ājizīn*. I then discuss the main characteristics of this text in terms of its doctrine and rhetorical forms, and finally show how Şūfī Allāhyār frames Sufism as a primarily ethical enterprise. In order to assess the social impact of the treatise, I detail the intellectual history of the book through its commentators, who have spread Allāhyār’s views among Uzbek, Tatar, Bashkir, Kazakh, and Uyghur students up until the early twentieth century.

The Life and Works of Şūfī Allāhyār

Şūfī Allāhyār is often said to have been born in 1025/1616, and his death dates range from 1117/1706 or 1124/1713 to 1133/1721 or 1136/1724; the date 1133/1721 tends to be widely accepted but remains uncertain. If we can accept the 1025/1616 birth date and the 1133/1721 death date, he would have lived to well over 100 years. In any case, Allāhyār was born in the village of Kattakurgan, northwest of Samarkand, and was active from the second half of the eleventh/seventeenth century to the turn of the twelfth/eighteenth century. His father, Temiryār Allāhqulī, sent his son at the age of ten to a madrasa in Bukhara. There, after having studied for fifteen years, Allāhyār became the chief of the commercial tax administration (*bāj maḥkemesi*).² The rest of his biography consists mostly of hagiographical anecdotes coming from a source written in Tatar in 1211/1796, and to which I will return in due course.

In one of these anecdotes, we read that, because of Allāhyār’s brash behavior and arrogant personality, after an altercation in the bazaar of Bukhara with a merchant who was actually the disciple of the Naqshbandī Mujaddidī sheikh Ḥājjī Ḥabībullāh Bukhārī (d. 1111/1699), the latter came to see Allāhyār. Having regretted his actions, Allāhyār became the sheikh’s disciple.³ According to another account, the sheikh ordered him to walk around Bukhara to sell liver and tripe on the streets in order to treat his arrogance.⁴

After twelve years in the service of his master, Allāhyār got his surname (*laqab*) Şūfī and became the deputy (*khalīfa*) of Ḥabībullāh, thus continuing the Mujaddidī lineage in the region. Ḥabībullāh was himself a *khalīfa* of the famous master Muḥammad Ma‘şūm (d. 1079/1668), who had firmly established the Mujaddidiyya in Central Asia.⁵ Şūfī Allāhyār opened a lodge in Kattakurgan, where he initiated people. He then moved to the village of Vakhshivar, next to the city of Denau in the Surkhandarya region. According to some sources, Sūfī Allāhyār was also the disciple of Nawrūz Shahrīsabzī, a *khalīfa* of Ḥabībullāh. After the death of Sūfī Allāhyār, only two *khalīfas* perpetuated the lineage: Shaykh Kūlābī (d. 1174/1760) and Ghāyib Naẓar Miyānkālī.⁶

2. Nigora Niiozova, *Sufi Olloiorning khaioti va ijodi* (Qarshi: Nasaf, 1995), 3–5; Abid Nazar Maḥdum, “Māverāū’-nehir mutasavviflarından Sūfī Allāhyār’da nakşibendî ve müceddidî merkezli irfân,” *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları* 221 (2016): 2; Necdet Tosun, “Sūfī Allāhyār,” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, suppl. 2 (2016): 528.

3. Tāj al-Dīn b. Yalchīghul al-Bashqordī, *Risāle-yi ‘azize, sherḥ-i thabāt al-‘ājizīn* (St. Petersburg: n.p., 1897), 6.

4. Bāshqordī, *Risāle-yi ‘azize*, 7.

5. Hamid Algar, “*Tariqat and Tariq*: Central Asian Naqshbandīs on the Roads to the Haramayn,” in *Central Asian Pilgrims: Hajj Routes and Pious Visits between Central Asia and the Hijaz*, eds. Alexandre Papas, Thomas Welsford, and Thierry Zarcone (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2011), 67.

6. Anke von Kügelgen, “Die Entfaltung der Naqşbandiya Muğaddidiya im Mittleren Transoxanien vom 18. bis zum

Şūfī Allāhyār authored four works devoted to the fields of jurisprudence, theology, and Sufism:

1. *Maslak al-muttaqīn* (The path of the god-weary), a work of Hanafi *fiqh* and creedal theology written in Persian verse in 1112/1700 and published in Lucknow (or Kanpur) in 1290/1873 and in Tashkent in 1311/1893 (or 1318/1900).⁷ Şūfī Allāhyār is said to have read his treatise and obtained the approval of scholars in Samarkand and Bukhara. Kūzī Khwāja Ḥāfiẓ Khwāja Oghlī translated the work into Chagatai Turkish under the title *Hidāyat al-muttaqīn*.
2. *Makhzan al-muṭīʿīn* (The treasury of the obedient), also a work of *fiqh* but written in Arabic.⁸
3. *Murād al-ʿarīfīn* (The gnostics' goal), a short Sufi essay in Persian published in Moscow in 1274/1858 and reprinted in Tashkent in 1330/1912.⁹ ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm b. Mullā ʿAbd al-Rashīd translated the book into Tatar and published it in Kazan in 1860. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Utiz-Imani al-Bulghārī (d. 1249/1834), to whom I shall return, wrote a commentary in Persian and Arabic entitled, *Tuḥfat al-tālībīn fī sharḥ-i abyāt-i murād al-ʿarīfīn*, and was printed in Kagan in 1326/1908.
4. *Thabāt al-ʿājizīn*, a didactic treatise in *mathnawī* form (as already noted). The work consists of 1,800 Turkic distiches in which Şūfī Allāhyār discusses articles of faith, observances, morals, and ethics from a Sufi perspective.¹⁰ It is the only work of our author written in Chagatai Turkish. In addition to numerous manuscript copies, the *Thabāt al-ʿājizīn* has been printed in lithograph form several times from the beginning of the thirteenth/nineteenth to the beginning of the fourteenth/twentieth century in Kashgar, Tashkent, Bukhara, Kazan (printed in 1300/1882), and Istanbul (ed. by Shaykh Sulaymān Bukhārī in 1299/1881).¹¹

In the *Thabāt's* introductory chapter, Şūfī Allāhyār suggests that his epistle could be either a “translation” or an extension of the *Murād al-ʿarīfīn*, and that he started writing the piece in Persian but eventually preferred to use Turkish, following his friends' advice. In any case, besides the usual literary trope of the book, resulting at the request from friends, we understand that the book has been written to concisely teach Sufi doctrine to Turkic-speaking Muslims. As we will see in the next section, this doctrine is mainly related to ethical issues experienced in the everyday lives of believers.

Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts: Ein Stück Detektivarbeit,” in *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the Early 20th Centuries*, eds. Anke von Kügelgen, Michael Kemper, and Allen J. Frank (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1998), 2:113–118.

7. <http://afghandata.org:8080/xmlui/handle/azu/17265>.

8. <http://www.kadl.sa/Browse.aspx?id=sgxjowirutja7woporkqmhku529g2matbfedu6f1zdvlxstzuo5kdoacszj6pe&p=1&m=556>.

9. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.aa0003466463;view=1up;seq=4>.

10. Şūfī Allāhyār, *Thabāt al-ʿājizīn* (Bukhara: Mullā Muḥammadi Makhdūm, 1911).

11. Henry F. Hofman, *Turkish Literature: A Bio-bibliographical Survey, Section III* (Utrecht: The University of Utrecht under the auspices of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1969), 71–81; Ludmila V. Dmitrieva, *Opisanie tiurskikh rukopisei Instituta Vostokovedeniia. III* (Moscow: Nauka, 1980), 92–96. Three additional writings were attributed to Şūfī Allāhyār but this is doubtful. Paolo Sartori notes the existence of manuscript copies in remote areas such as the Qaraqalpaq region; see his “*Jtihād in Bukhara: Central Asian Jadidism and Local Genealogies of Cultural Change*,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 59 (2106): n. 78. Further manuscript copies and prints can be found in Gansu, Eastern Turkestan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and Syria: see ʿAbd al-Jabbār Niknahad, *Şūfī Allāhyār mandūma-yi Thabāt al-ʿājizīn* (Gonbad-e Kāvus: Ḥājī Ṭalāʾī, 1994), and Abudurehemu Wubuli, “Doğu Türkistan medreselerinde islam düşüncesi: Süfî Allayhar'ın *Sebatül-âcizîn* adlı eseri ekseninde inceleme” (unpubl. MA Thesis, Ankara Üniversitesi, 2015), 105.

Sufism as Ethics

To develop his teachings and provide them with a solid basis, Sūfī Allāhyār made use of various sources in the *Thabāt*. Alongside a few Qurʾānic verses and hadiths quoted from the *Mishkāt al-masābīḥ* by al-Khaṭīb al-Tabrīzī (written in 737/1336) and references to traditionists such as ʿĀmir al-Shaʿbī (d. ca. 104/723) and Abūʿl-Layth al-Samarqandī (d. 373/983), we find allusions to Sufi masters, and especially Naqshbandī Mujaddidīs: Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1034/1624), Muḥammad Maʿṣūm, and Ḥabībullah Bukhārī. There are also Central Asian Sufis quoted such as Aḥmad Yasawī (d. 562/1166) and Khwāja Yūsuf Hamadānī (d. 535/1140). Lastly, Sūfī Allāhyār mentions the *Tanbih al-ḍāllīn* that he attributes to Abūʿl-Ḥasan Kharāqānī (d. 425/1033), although the book seems to have been composed by a Naqshbandī author named Dūst-Muḥammad b. Nawrūz Aḥmad al-Kīshī Fālizkāṛ (tenth/sixteenth century, a disciple of the famous master Aḥmad Kāsānī, d. 949/1542).¹²

As a book of advice and education in which the form is as important as the content, the *Thabāt al-ʿājjizīn* first urges its reader in very direct and explicit terms to be a good Muslim—that is, a follower of the Sunna in his acts and intentions, and a strict observer of the *sharīʿa*.¹³ For our author, a good Muslim is a Sunni and someone who works and remains active but never neglects his religious duties. He is also a moral person, a pious but not ostentatious believer, and a Sufi who follows the examples of the prophets as perfect adherents of the sacred law. Allāhyār’s tone is straightforward and the work’s general content fits squarely into the genre of Sufi didactic literature.¹⁴ Yet, there is an allusion to unruly, antinomian, or at least controversial Sufis who declare themselves to be above the law and commandments when they attain proximity to God. This is a leitmotiv in the treatise due to a particular context that we will encounter again.

For Allāhyār, a good Muslim is also a good Sufi in the sense that Sufism offers the most complete model of ethics and morality. Allāhyār stresses the necessity of spiritual leadership for pious Muslims, but equally the necessity for the master to apply the precepts of law and to be knowledgeable.¹⁵ The good Sufi should practice renunciation. However, rather than the usual *tark-i dunyā* (renunciation of the world) *stricto sensu* or any *contemptus mundi* resulting from renunciation, it is moral behavior and ethical uprightness which, paradoxically, define “renunciation.”¹⁶

Playing with the conceptual couple of *himmat* and *minnat* (spiritual aspiration and moral obligation), Allāhyār interprets renunciation as a struggle against covetousness, and calls for a moral reform of oneself, rather than a psycho-ontological purgation of the self. In a chapter in which he recounts his advice to his own sons, Allāhyār, the now-transformed chief of the tax administration, offers his admonitions about bad (but lucrative) professions and, again, covetousness, both major forms of temptation for youth.¹⁷

12. Abid Nazar Mahdum, “On the sources of *Sebātūʿl-ācizīn* by Sūfī Allāhyār,” *Türkiyat Mecmuası* 21 (2011): 239–53.

13. Allāhyār, *Thabāt*, 58–59. An equivalent emphasis on Sunna can be found in distiches on p. 31.

14. Abid Nazar Mahdum, “Sūfī Allāhyār’da tasavvufî tenkit,” *Turkish Studies* 10, no. 12 (2015): 845–68.

15. Allāhyār, *Thabāt*, 38.

16. Allāhyār, *Thabāt*, 49–50.

17. Allāhyār, *Thabāt*, 104.

Promoting a sort of ascetic morality, Sūfī Allāhyār describes aspects of self-discipline in both personal and interpersonal contexts. His main point of emphasis is upon spiritual exercises (sing. *riyāḍat*), considered as acts of obedience rather than acts of disciplining the body per se.¹⁸ As for the language which Sufis should use, the author tells us that the aspiring Sufi should refrain from inappropriate or excessive utterances (with, perhaps, an allusion to *shaṭaḥāt*), and defends sober, beautiful, and calculated forms of expression.¹⁹

Alongside the cultivation of one's speech, gentleness of behavior is a requirement in the everyday life of a Sufi who lives alongside the community of believers.²⁰ Our text is thus a basic manual of Sufi ethics which carefully delineates the limits of Sufism as a spiritual lifestyle. Social relationships through proper personal discipline, language, and conduct make the Sufi individual a complete human being, socially speaking. In a sense, Allāhyār reinforces the trend of the early modern Naqshbandiyya towards social responsibility and politico-religious involvement.²¹ Nowhere do we find references to bodily practices, mystical experiences, or even esoteric teachings. That is not to say that these notions are denied by Allāhyār, but rather are cast aside on account of the fact that they would be harmful for the masses. This also explains why the text also includes a chapter which criticizes the antinomian tendencies among contemporary Sufis in Central Asia. The chapter in question is tellingly entitled, "On Detachment from the World" (*dunyāḍīn tajarrud bolmaghning bayāni*).²²

The Naqshbandī sheikh isolates two groups that he considers to be fake Sufis—namely Rawshanīs (not to be confused with the Ottoman Ruşenīs, a branch of the Khalwatiyya/Halvetiyye, or the Afghan Sufi movement known as Rawshaniyya) and pseudo-Yasawīs, about whom we have little to no information. Comparable to either Qalandars or Sufis on the fringes of Islamic society, these two antinomian groups apparently flourished at this time in Central Asia.²³ They were usually accused of immoral attitudes, illegitimate exercise of authority, secret Shiite tendencies, and so forth. Once again, Sūfī Allāhyār categorically rejects such expressions of "Sufism," which are not only unruly but also unethical.

There is no need to further outline the content of the *Thabāt al-ʿājizīn*, as we understand that its author had one main goal in mind: to present Sufism in simple and practical terms as the ethical tradition of Islam, a tradition that is transmitted to students and is not concerned with profound Sufi metaphysical doctrines, on the one hand, or deviant practices by marginal dervishes on the other. Beyond the simplicity of the writing style and the somewhat proverbial expressions preferred

18. Allāhyār, *Thabāt*, 64. See also the distiches on p. 59 on the necessity to perform *riyāḍat* within the framework of law.

19. Allāhyār, *Thabāt*, 73.

20. Allāhyār, *Thabāt*, 75–76.

21. On this trend, see my *Soufisme et politique entre Chine, Tibet et Turkestan. Etude sur les Khwājas naqshbandīs du Turkestan oriental* (Paris: Jean Maisonneuve, 2005).

22. Allāhyār, *Thabāt*, 55–56.

23. Alexandre Papas, *Mystiques et vagabonds en islam. Portraits de trois soufis qalandars* (Paris: Cerf, 2010). It might be of interest to note that seventeenth-century marginal Sufis authored treatises on Sufi manners (*ādāb*); for a detailed study of one of them, see my *Thus Spake the Dervish: Sufism, Language, and the Religious Margins in Central Asia, 1400–1900* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), ch. 2.

throughout the text, what strikes the historian anxious to contextualize the *Thabāt* is the huge success the book has encountered in the long run and over a vast geographic expanse.

The *Thabāt al-‘ājizīn* and Its Commentators in Central Eurasia

In addition to the spread of manuscript copies and lithographic prints, the *Thabāt al-‘ājizīn* became extremely popular thanks to commentaries written by prominent literati of the time, especially in the Muslim provinces of Russia. We know of at least five *shurūh*, the first three of which circulated in the madrasas of Central Eurasia, thus drawing a rough but fascinating cartography of the social reception of the *Thabāt al-‘ājizīn*. Thanks to trans-regional Sufi networks, Sufi authors themselves circulated many texts in the area and suggested that Sūfī Allāhyār’s treatise was key to the intellectual and educational exchanges which were taking place from Turkey to Western China, including places such as Istanbul, St. Petersburg, Kazan, Bukhara, Kabul, and Kashgar.

As early as 1211/1796, the Bashkir Sufi and historian Tāj al-Dīn b. Yalchīghul al-Bashqordī (d. 1254/1838) wrote a commentary upon the *Thabāt* in Tatar entitled *Risāle-yi ‘azīze, sherḥ-i thabāt al-‘ājizīn*. The commentary was printed in St. Petersburg in 1264/1847 and again in Kazan in 1267/1850.²⁴ The word ‘*Azīze* in the title serves a double-function: it seeks to honor the author, Sūfī Allāhyār, while also making an allusion to the name of the commentator’s daughter, who had asked her father to write a commentary upon the *Thabāt*.

Tāj al-Dīn was born in 1180/1767 or 1181/1768 and studied in the province of Ufa, but left Bashkiria at a young age with his father for the Hajj. After several years in the regions of Daghestan and Astrakhan, both arrived in Diyarbakir (in southeastern Anatolia), where Tāj al-Dīn received an education over a period of four years. After two years in Istanbul, they returned to Astrakhan. Later, he taught in the province of Ufa for seven years, after which he became *mudarris* there, where he spent the rest of his life and wrote most of his works.

At least fourteen editions of Tāj al-Dīn’s *Risāle* were published in addition to his many other writings.²⁵ This commentary was one of the most influential and popular works in the *maktab* curriculum of the Volga-Ural region and Siberia. Such a work fostered proselytism among animist and baptized Tatar children, given that Allāhyār’s poetry was a part of their schooling curriculum and they were expected to memorize it.²⁶ As noted previously, Tāj al-Dīn b. Yalchīghul compiled a short biography of Allāhyār made of hagiographical anecdotes, along with a list of his

24. Manuscript references in Ludmila V. Dmitrieva, *Opisanie tiurskikh rukopisei*, 99–100.

25. Allen J. Frank, *Islamic Historiography and ‘Bulghar’ Identity among the Tatars and Bashkirs of Russia* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 95–99; A. Deniz Abik, “‘Sebātü’l-‘Acizin’ in Kazan sahasında bir şerhi: *Risāle-i ‘Azīze*,” *Modern Türklük Araştırmaları Dergisi* 4, no. 4 (2007): 28–44.

26. Allen J. Frank, *Bukhara and the Muslims of Russia: Sufism, Education, and the Paradox of Islamic Prestige* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 79; Agnès Nilüfer Kefeli, *Becoming Muslim in Imperial Russia: Conversion, Apostasy, and Literacy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 69.

writings.²⁷ He also explained that he had composed his commentary to make the treatise more widely understandable with the aide of glosses and explanations.²⁸

The second commentary of the *Thabāt al-‘ājjizīn* fuses Turkish and Arabic, and was composed by the aforementioned Utīz-Imani al-Bulghārī.²⁹ Born in 1165/1752 or 1167/1754 in Chistay/Chistopol (in Tatarstan), he studied in the Molla Vildān madrasa in Utīz-Iman, then in the Velīd b. Muḥammad el-Emīn madrasa in Kargala. Later, he became a teacher at the Sterlibash madrasa in Bashkortostan. Despite Bulghārī’s position, he went to Bukhara and Samarkand in 1202/1788 with his family to deepen his learning, and on to the cities of Herat and Kabul in 1210/1796. He studied in Bukhara under ‘Abd al-Qayyūm b. ‘Abd al-Karīm b. Allāhyār, who was evidently the grandson of Šūfī Allāhyār.³⁰ In Kabul, Bulghārī was initiated into the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya by Fayḍ Khān Kābūlī (d. 1216/1802); like other Tatars, he was attracted by the scholarly reputation of the city in general and the sheikh in particular.³¹ In 1212/1798, after the death of his wife, he returned to Utīz-Iman. However, he went to Karaçeşme after having been unfavorably received by the local population in the city. After staying there for a year, Bulghārī became a professor at the madrasas of Ebi and Kuakbaş. For a while, he remained in Timeş (his father’s village) and eventually migrated to the village of Mereç in Bashkortostan, where he stayed until the end of his life. A reader and copyist of Aḥmad Sirhindi’s works, Utīz-Imani al-Bulghārī was famous for his stern religious indictments against the consumption of alcohol and, more generally, borrowings from Russian traditions.³²

A third commentary contributed to the popularity of the *Thabāt al-‘ājjizīn*. Entitled *A‘yān-i māzī* or *Dibācha-yi fā’iza*, it was authored by Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Chuqurī (d. 1306/1889), who also produced Sufi poems and many prose works. Chuqurī was born in 1241/1826 near Ufa in Tatarstan; his father was an imam and sheikh in Eski Chuqur village and was a member of a rich and deep-rooted Bashkir family. Chuqurī began his education in various nearby village madrasas when he was seventeen years old. In 1265/1849, he went to Bukhara with the intention of improving his education, but upon the passing of his father, who had introduced him to Sufism at a young age, he was compelled to return to his hometown.

After the death of his father, both Muḥammad Murād Badakhshānī and Hāris Ishān (Muḥammad Hāris Isterlibashi Tokayev, d. 1287/1870) continued to provide Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Chuqurī with a Sufi education. Chuqurī married the daughter of a sheikh named Jalāl al-Dīn. When he was twenty-three, he returned to Chuqur and became an imam. In 1289/1872, he went on his first Hajj, thus following in the footsteps of the Tatars who established contacts with centers of Islamic learning in the Middle East rather than with Bukhara.³³ He met several sheikhs in Istanbul. In

27. Tāj al-Dīn b. Yalchīghul, *Risāle-yi ‘azīze*, 7.

28. Tāj al-Dīn b. Yalchīghul, *Risāle-yi ‘azīze*, 3.

29. Manuscript references in Ludmila V. Dmitrieva, *Opisanie tiurskikh rukopisei*, 98.

30. Allen J. Frank, *Bukhara and the Muslims of Russia*, 128–129.

31. Hamid Algar, “Shaykh Zaynullah Rasulev, the Last Great Naqshbandi Shaykh of the Volga-Urals Region,” in *Muslims in Central Asia*, ed. Jo-Ann Gross (Durham-London: Duke University Press, 1992), 113.

32. İsmail Türkoğlu and İbrahim Maraş, “Otuz-İmeni, Abdürrahim,” *Diyanet İslam Ansiklopedisi* 34 (2007): 11–12; Necdet Tosun, *Türkistan dervişlerinden yadıgâr. Orta Asya türkçesiyle yazılmış tasavvufî eserler* (Istanbul: İsan Yayınları, 2011), 82–83; Agnès Nilüfer Kefeli, *Becoming Muslim in Imperial Russia*, 71–72, 132–133.

33. Hamid Algar, “Shaykh Zaynullah Rasulev,” 115.

Medina, he received an *ijāza* from the Indian Mujaddidī master Muḥammad Maẓhar (d. 1301/1883). Then he started to train disciples. He made no less than four major pilgrimages between 1289/1872 and 1304/1886.³⁴

The two last commentaries on the *Thabāt al-‘ājjizīn* are Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn b. Rāvil al-Salīmī al-Kirānī’s *Irshād al-‘ājjizīn, sherḥ-i thabāt al-‘ājjizīn* (written in Tatar Turkish and printed in Kazan in 1311/1893 and 1328/1910) and Sayyid Ḥabībullāh b. Sayyid Yaḥyā Khān’s *Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn*. Unfortunately, we do not have much information about their authors or their works’ contents. What we do know is that the influence of *Thabāt al-‘ājjizīn* and its various *sharḥs* extended far beyond Central Asian Sufi circles and families. Indeed, the German Orientalist Martin Hartmann reports that the son of his host in Ghulja (in eastern Turkestan) was learning the *Thabāt*, which had been printed in Kashgar as early as 1312/1894.³⁵ In this city during the 1350s/1930s, Ṣūfī Allāhyār’s poetry was apparently taught to teenagers in *maktab* classes along with basic Arabic, Persian, and Turkic, the Qur’ān, and the poetry of Ḥāfiẓ (d. 792/1389) and Navā’ī (d. 907/1501).³⁶ Other scholars think that the *Thabāt* was an intermediate level textbook for madrasas in eastern Turkestan. The fact is that the treatise was a part of madrasa education in Russia and the Kazakh steppe in the beginning of the fourteenth/twentieth century and even figured in an academic program for the “new-method” (*uṣūl-i jadīd*) schools established by Muslim Reformists in Tashkent in 1328/1910.³⁷

Conclusion

Far from being a dense theoretical treatise destined to remain in the hands of a reified intellectual and spiritual elite, the *Thabāt al-‘ājjizīn* was a basic, widespread manual of Sufism for successive generations of madrasa students in Central Eurasia. Thanks to the emergent Sufi networks, the more classical methods of the intellectual transmission (i.e., the *sharḥ* tradition), and new means of knowledge production (i.e., print), Ṣūfī Allāhyār’s moral Sufi vision has had a strong influence on the Muslim intelligentsia in the region. Such a vision was of course certainly not new to the history of Sufism,³⁸ but what gives *Thabāt al-‘ājjizīn* pride of place in the annals of Sufi literature is that it offers a unique Sufi ethical vision in a unique historical context, while also pointing up the importance of a moral (rather than a legal) emphasis in Central Asian Sufi thought in the modern period.

34. Necdet Tosun, *Türkistan dervişlerinden yadigâr*, 97–99; Allen J. Frank, *Islamic Historiography*, 140.

35. Martin Hartmann, “Das Buchwesen in Turkestan und die türkischen Drucke der Sammlung Hartmann,” in *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1904), 95.

36. Haji Nur Haji and Chen Guoguang, *Shinjang islam tarixi* (Urumqi: Millätlär Näshriyatı, 1995), 364.

37. Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 168, 171.

38. For overviews, see Francesco Chiabotti, Eve Feuillebois-Pierunek, Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, and Luca Patrizi, eds., *Ethics and Spirituality in Islam: Sufi Adab* (Leiden: Brill, 2017); Saeko Yazaki, “Morality in Early Sufi Literature,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Sufism*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 75–98.

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