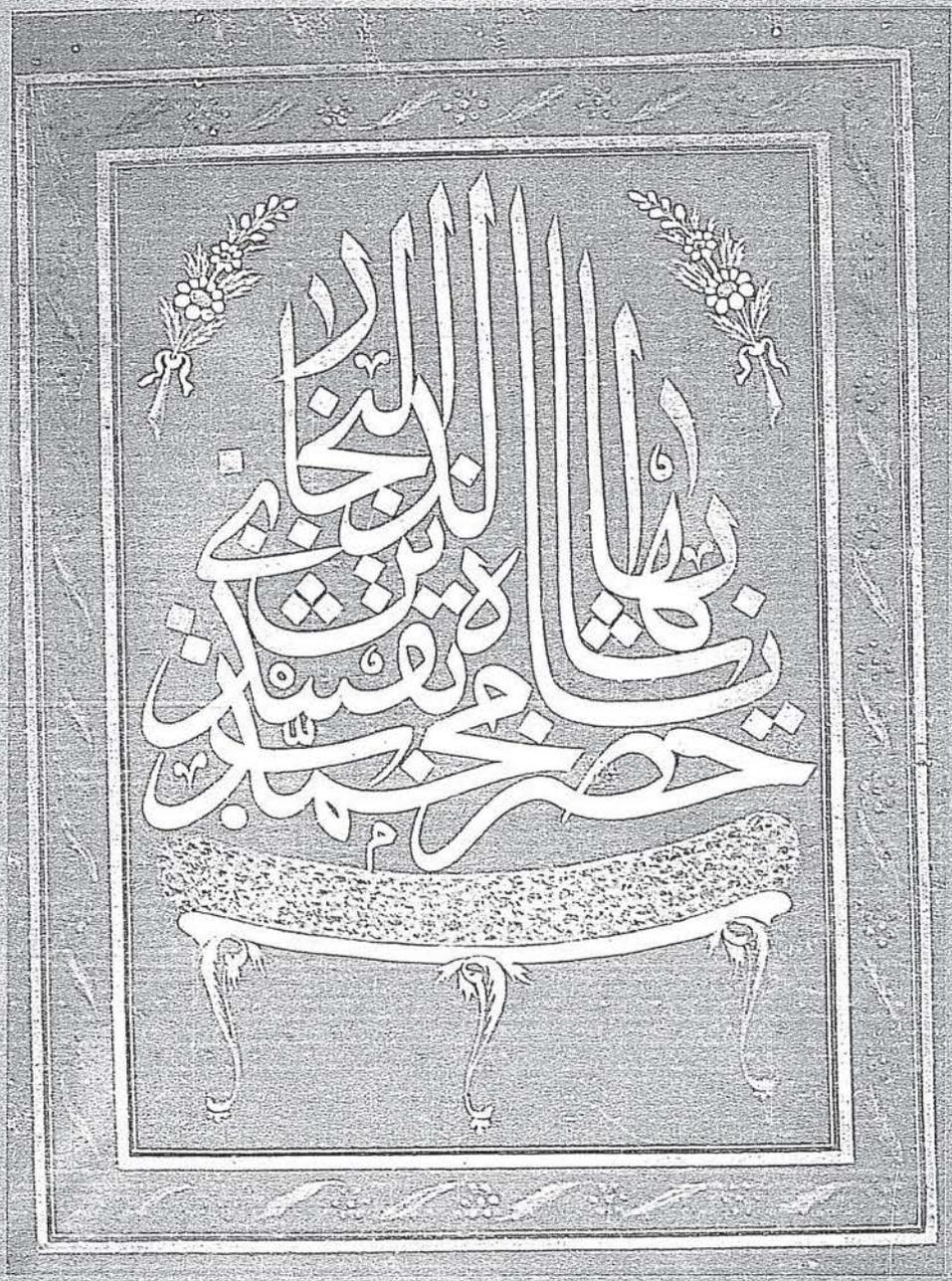


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NAQSHBANDIS

IN WESTERN AND CENTRAL ASIA



Edited by Elisabeth Özdalga

SWEDISH RESEARCH INSTITUTE IN ISTANBUL 1999



**NAQSHBANDIS
IN WESTERN AND CENTRAL ASIA
CHANGE AND CONTINUITY**

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A Note on “Rashahāt-ı ‘Ain al -Hayat” in the Nineteenth Century

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Rashahāt-ı ‘Ain al-Hayat (Eng.: Trickle from the Fountain of Life), is a hagiography of Khoja Nāsir al-Dīn ‘Ubaid Allah ibn Mahmud al-Shashi, better known as Khoja ‘Ubaid Allah Ahrār, the great Naqshbandī sheikh of Transoxania in the fifteenth century (806/1404-895/1490). Khoja Nāsir al-Dīn was born in the village of Baghistan near Tashkent,¹ but he lived most of his life in Samarqand, the capital of the Timurid dynasty, thus becoming known also as ‘Ubaid Allah al-Samarqandi.² The author of the hagiography was Fakhr al-Din ‘Ali ibn Husein al-Wā‘iz al-Kāshifi of Harat (Herat in north-west Afghanistan), known also by his nom de plume: al-Şafi.³ Kāshifi wrote the book in Persian, the literary language of the later Islamic centuries in the eastern Islamic lands, during the first years of the sixteenth century, the tenth hijra century.

‘Ubaid Allah Ahrār was initiated into the Naqshbandi order by Sheikh Ya‘qūb al-Charkhi in Chaganiyan and became his deputy (*khalifa*), in which capacity he was active for over sixty years. It was under ‘Ubaid Allah Ahrār’s guidance that the Naqshbandi order became the predominant order in central Asia.⁴ Kāshifi became a disciple of Ahrār in the last years of the Khoja’s life. Twice he travelled from Herat to Samarqand to attend his presence, first in 889/1484 and again in 893/1488, two years before the death of the sheikh. Throughout the book he calls him “shaikhuna,” our master,⁵ indicating discipleship, but it does not seem that Kāshifi was trained to be a *khalifa* of Ahrār since the time he spent in the company of Khoja was too short. He stated that he served him “four months the first time and eight months the second”⁶ but usually took several years for someone to be trained as a *khalifa* by Ahrār.

Much of the material Kāshifi includes about the Khoja was what he himself had heard directly (*bi-lā wāsiṭa*) from him. After every session (with Ahrār) (*b‘ad-a inqidā‘-i kull-i suhba*), he tells us, he recorded what he heard from him,⁷ a matter which lends the book a high degree of authenticity. In addition, he recorded things he himself observed or heard from other disciples.⁸ Thus the book is largely based on Kāshifi’s personal experience. But he also used what two *khalifas* of the Khoja

1 H. Algar, “A Brief History of the Naqshbandī Order,” in M. Gaborieau et al. (eds.), *Naqshbandis*, Editions ISIS Istanbul-Paris, 1990, pp. 3-44; see p. 13 (hereafter Algar, “A Brief History”).

2 Abdulmajid al-Khani, *al-Hada‘iq al-Wardiyya fi Haqā‘iq Ajilla‘ al-Naqshbandiyya*, Cairo, 1308/ [1890-1891], p. 156.

3 On Ali ibn Husein ... al-Kashifi, see Tahsin Yazıcı, “Şafi,” in *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 10, p. 61 and bibliography (Hereafter *İA*). See also *EP*, vol. 8, pp. 800-801. Kashifi’s father Husein was a well-known poet and preacher in Harat, see *EP*, vol. 4, pp. 704-705

4 Algar, “A Brief History,” pp. 13f.

5 See M. Murad al-Qazani al-Manzilawi (trans.), *Rashahāt ‘Ain al-Hayat*, Mecca, 1890, p. 4.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 175.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 159.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 5

had written about their master, namely Mir Abd al-Awwal (who was also the Khoja's son-in-law) and Qadī Muḥammad al-Zāhid, his favourite disciple during the last twelve years of his life.⁹

Kāshifi divides his book into a *maqala* (discourse) which serves as an introduction to the book, followed by three *maqšads* (chapters) and a *khātima* (end), to use his own terminology. He gives at the beginning of the *maqala* the Naqshbandī chain of succession, starting with Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, the first Caliph, whom the Naqshbandīs regard as the head of their chain, and then lists the Khojagān, the predecessors of the Naqshbandīs. Most of the introduction, however, is dedicated to Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband al-Bukharī, the founder of the order in the fourteenth century, and to successive *khalifas* up to Khoja Aḥrār.

Thus, roughly speaking, the first half of the book forms a history of the early phase of the Naqshbandī order. The following three chapters (*maqšads*), nearly making up the other half, are all about 'Ubaid Allah Aḥrār. The first chapter tells us about his parentage, childhood, travels and companionship (*suḥba*) with Naqshbandī sheikhs i.e., his training and initiation into the order. The second records his sayings or traditions and the teachings he conveyed in his sessions (*majlis*). In the third *maqšad*, which is by far the most important, Kāshifi describes the relations Aḥrār maintained with the Timurid rulers of Samarqand, the influence he had upon them, and the struggle he led to secure the supremacy of the shari'a in the state instead of Timurid practices of government derived from Mongol norms. In this respect, Aḥrār became a model for many Naqshbandī sheikhs after him. This part concludes with a brief discussion about each of Aḥrār's *khalifas*. At the end there is a short description of Aḥrār's death.

The *Rashaḥāt* was completed in 909/1503-4, fourteen years after the death of Aḥrār. It soon acquired a place of prominence among Muslim hagiographical literature. Thus, it was not strange that it soon reached the Ottoman lands and about the mid-1580s was translated into Ottoman Turkish.

Indeed, throughout the sixteenth century, due to certain political developments, there seemed to have been a growing tendency towards Sunni-orthodox beliefs among the Ottoman elite. The first of these developments was the conflict with the Shi'a Safawids, which was to prove a bitter and longstanding one. Among other things, the Ottoman expansion into the Arab lands brought the Muslim Holy places in Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem within the sultan's domains. "The Empire was no longer a frontier state but an Islamic Caliphate" wrote Inalcık,¹⁰ who observed, moreover, that the growing consciousness of the Ottoman leading classes of the new status of the state led to the strengthening of Orthodox Islamic feeling among them.¹¹ And we cannot fail to observe how during this century the Sunni-orthodox legal and cultural character of the state was emphasized. An aspect of this development was that the Sultan "entrusted the Şeyh ül-Islam Ebussuud with the task of bringing the secular laws of the state into conformity with the *şeriat*."¹² Another aspect was a growing movement of translating religious texts from Arabic and Persian into Ottoman-Turkish. The *Ihyā' Ulūm al-Din* of Ghazālī, and al-Qushairi's *Risala* are but two clear examples of this movement.¹³ The translation of the *Rashaḥāt* should be seen within

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5, *Masmu'at and Silsilat al-'Arifin wa Tadhkirat al-Siddiqin*, respectively. See *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol. I, London, 1985.

¹⁰ H. Inalcık, *The Ottoman Empire. The Classical Age 1300-1600*, London, 1973, p. 34.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34 and 182.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ The translation of Qushairi's *Risala* was undertaken by Hoca Sa'deddin Efendi who was the tutor of Sultan Murad III and of his son Mehmed III and served as sheikh al-Islam (*Devhat-ül Meşayih*, pp. 36-38); and the translator of *Ihyā' Ulum al-Din* of Gazzali was Bostanzade Mehmed Efendi, to which he

the context of this trend.

The one to undertake the translation was Muhammad Ma'rûf ibn Muhammad Sherifel-Abbasi of Trabzon, sometimes called Ma'rûf 'Ārifi¹⁴ or Muhammad Sherif al-Trabzonî, which he completed in Zilhicce 993/ [December, 1585] when he was serving as the *qađî* of İzmir (Smyrna). It does not seem that he had been commissioned by anybody or that he was rewarded for his efforts, and we assume he acted on his own initiative.

Whether or not Muhammad Ma'rûf was a follower of the Naqshbandî order, is not known. Bursali, in a short reference to him in his *Osmanlı Müellifleri*, says that "he was affiliated ... with the sufi path,"¹⁵ but nowhere is it explicitly stated that he was a Naqshbandî or who his sufi master was. But we may find

an indication in the introduction to the book of what motivated him to undertake the translation. Since his youth, he writes, he had always preferred the sheikhs of this order, *taife*, i.e., the Naqshbandiyya, and he spent most of his time learning about them and their manners and character (*şemayil ve efvâr*). Moreover, he added, he became fond of the book and found it to be "like a physician for the soul" (*tabîbî cān gîbî*) and a therapy for the heart. Consequently, it was this that made him decide to translate it and thus spread its benefits.¹⁶

Muhammad Ma'rûf' worked on his translation during the days of Sultan Murad III (1574-1595), who was known for his pious disposition and his strong tendency towards sufism.¹⁷ During his reign, many mosques and *tekkes* were built or restored. First among these was the Kā'be in Mecca.¹⁸ Two sufi sheikhs were especially close to Sultan Murad. The first, Sheikh Şuja' (d. 996/1587-8), was a Khalwatî and the



Calligraphy in the form of a Naqshbandî headgear, *kulah*, saying: Hazret-i (the revered) Shah Sultan Muhammad Bahâ' al-Din Naqshband (Istanbul Ansiklopedisi, vol. 6, p. 38, Istanbul 1994).

gave the title: *Yenâbiu'l-Yakin fi Ihyâ'î 'ulumi'd-din*. Bostanzade Mehmed served twice as sheikh al-Islam during the reigns of Murad III and Mehmed III (*Devhat-ül Meşayih*, pp. 34-35). See M. İpşirli, "Bostanzade Mehmed Efendi," in *TDV İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 6, p. 311. See also M. T. Brussali, *Osmanlı Müellifleri* (hereafter *OM*), I, p. 256. For the translation of other books see H. Z. Ülken, *İslam Düşüncesi*, Istanbul, 1946, pp. 202-204; see also *idem.*, *Türk Tefekkürü Tarihi*, vol. II, Istanbul, 1933, pp. 217ff; see also *OM*, I, pp. 347-348, 400 and II, 19, 24, 43, 49.

¹⁴ As in *Sicill-i Osmani* (hereafter *SO*), vol. 4, p. 502.

¹⁵ *OM*, vol. 2, p. 22.

¹⁶ See p. 5 and p. 6 of the Cairo edition of A. H. 1269/1853 and p. 6 and p. 7 of the Istanbul edition of A. H. 1291/1874.

¹⁷ See Nev'izade Atâi, *Zeyl-i Şeşakik*, Istanbul, 1268/1853, p. 382; *IA*, "Murad III", vol. 8, pp. 624ff. Cf. also C. H. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire*, Princeton, 1986, p. 75 and n. 15 and pp. 111-113.

¹⁸ *Nuhat-ul Tevârih ve'l Ahbâr*, Istanbul, A. H. 1276/1859-60, pp. 132-3; *IA*, vol. 8, p. 625.

second, Sheikh Sha‘ban (d. 1002/1593), a Naqshbandī.¹⁹ Murad III’s attitude towards the Naqshbandī order was demonstrated moreover by his patronage of Sheikh Ahmad Šādik, the prominent Naqshbandī sheikh from Tashkent who had immigrated to Istanbul and settled there.²⁰ No doubt keenly aware of the attitude of Sultan Murad III towards the Naqshbandī order, Muhammad Ma‘rūf not surprisingly praises the Sultan lavishly in his introduction and enumerates his praiseworthy qualities in terms that may be seen as a dedication.

Muhammed Ma‘rūf’s translation of the *Rashaḥāt* was, it seems, widely used - no major library in Istanbul was without a copy of it.²¹ The expansion of the Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī order in Istanbul since the last decades of the 17th century undoubtedly contributed to the rising popularity of the book. But it seems that it reached its widest circulation in the 19th century, with the advent of printing, when it saw many editions not only in Ottoman Turkish but in the original Persian as well as in Arabic in different lands of the Muslim world.

The first time the Ottoman Turkish translation of Muhammad Ma‘rūf came out in print was in 1236/1821, in Istanbul. In the following decades it saw five more editions. Two of these were printed in Cairo, the first at the Bulāq press in Muharram 1256/March 1840, and the second at al-‘Āmira press in 1269/1853. It is interesting to note that the first of these two prints was ordered by al-Hajj ‘Uthman Nuri Efendi al-Istanbuli, and the second by Colonel (*Binbaşı*) İzmirli Emin Efendi. Both names suggest that they were Turks though they may have been residing in Cairo.

The publication of the text that appeared in Istanbul in 1279/1862-3 was printed in Ṭabī‘hane ‘Āmire. Another one came out twelve years later in 1291/1874, also in Istanbul, this time in lithograph. In the margins of this edition were printed thirteen sufi tracts, most of which are Naqshbandī-Khalidī literature, suggesting that this edition was printed by Khalidīs. The text of all these editions is identical. As far as it is known, no further editions were printed in Istanbul, not even during the reign of Sultan Abduhamid II, during which hundreds of sufi books and tracts were published, sometimes with the encouragement of the authorities.

A sixth Ottoman-Turkish print in the 19th century, again of the same translation, was printed in Qazān on the Volga basin in 1306/1888-9 “with the permission and license of the Russian [authority of] Education in ... Peterburg [sic] issued on 28 Dekaber [sic] 1888 of the Christian *hijra* [sic].” That it was printed there suggests the existence of a reading public and of a following of the Naqshbandī order in those regions even before the spreading of the Khalidiyya-Ziyā’iyya there by sheikh Zayn Allah.²²

Indeed, the fact that *Rashaḥāt ‘Ain al-Ḥayat* saw six editions in Ottoman-Turkish during the 19th century may be seen as an indication of the popularity of the book among Turkish readers and the wide following the Naqshbandī order enjoyed among them. Though a latecomer to Istanbul, the Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī, the leading branch of the Naqshbandī order in the later centuries, acquired the largest number of lodges,

19 On sheikh Shujā‘, see *SO*, vol. 3, p. 137; and on sheikh Sha‘ban ‘Ata’i, p. 371; and *SO*, vol. 3, p. 148.

20 Mustafa Selaniki, *Tarih-i Selaniki*, Istanbul, A. H. 1281/1864-65, p. 211; D. Le Gall, *The Ottoman Naqshbandīs in the Pre-Mujaddidī Phase*, Dissertation, Princeton University, 1992, pp. 73f.

21 C. A. Story, *Persian Literature. A Bio-Bibliographical Survey*, vol. 1, pt. 2, London, 1972, pp. 964ff. *İstanbul Kitaplıkları Tarih-Coğrafya Yazmaları Kataloğu*, pp. 496-504.

22 al-Qazāni, Muhammad ibn Abdullah, *Dhail al-Rashahat*, pp. 182-183 on sheikh M. Zakir al-Jistawi, a *Khalifa* in the Khalidiyya who was active in Qazān before the end of the nineteenth century. See also H. Algar “Sheikh Zaynullah Rasulev, the Last Great Naqshbandī sheikh of the Volga-Urals Region,” in Jo Ann Gross (ed.), *Muslims in Central Asia, Expressions of Identity and Change*, Durham and London, 1992, pp. 112-133.

tekkes, in the city in the 19th century.²³ It is doubtful whether any other Islamic religious text saw as many editions in less than seventy years.

However, the *Rashaḥāt* seems to have been equally popular in other parts of the Muslim world, for instance in Muslim India, among the readers of Persian or in Central Asia. It is known that within less than a decade, the book was twice printed in the original Persian, in Lucknow (India) in 1308/1890 and in 1315/1897 in lithograph.²⁴ According to C. A. Story, it was also printed in Cawnpore, in 1911/12, a printing which is “described as a seventh edition.”²⁵ If he is right, this brings the Persian editions in India to nine. Moreover, another Persian edition appeared in 1911 in Tashkent.²⁶

In addition, the *Rashaḥāt* was also translated into Arabic and published in Mecca, in 1890. In fact, it had already been translated into Arabic once in the early seventeenth century, by Sheikh Taj al-Din Zakariyya al-‘Abshami, an Indian Naqshbandī and a disciple of Sheikh Baqī Billah, who after the death of his master in Delhi (1603) immigrated to Mecca where he died in 1640.²⁷

The new Arabic translation, however, was undertaken about mid-1880s by Muhammad Murad b. Abdullah al-Qazāni al-Manzilawi, who came originally from the vicinity of Qazān and settled in Mecca; hence his nickname Qazāni.

Sheikh Murad seems to have been well versed in Arabic, Persian and, of course, in Turkish. In Mecca he was initiated into the Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī order. His other main contribution there was the translation from Persian into Arabic of the collection of letters of Sheikh Ahmad al-Sirhindi (*The Maktūbāt*) in three volumes²⁸ (printed in Mecca in 1317/1899-1900).

In his introduction to the translation of *Rashaḥāt*, Qazāni claims that neither was he familiar with nor had he seen an earlier Arabic translation. “I have not found anybody until this very day who has undertaken its translation [into Arabic],” he wrote in his introduction.²⁹ But a close examination of the two translations leaves us in doubt whether he was speaking the truth. At any rate, he seems to have been helped by the Ottoman-Turkish translation.³⁰ Qazāni appended his translation with a short review of the famous Naqshbandī sheikhs from Qāḍī Muhammad al-Zahid, the prominent disciple of Khoja Aḥrār, through Sirhindi and his chain down to Sheikh Muhammad Mazhar, and Mazhar’s *khalifa* in Mecca, Muhammad Salih al-Zawāwi, who was Qazāni’s master in the order and who funded the edition of his translation.³¹ This treatise, which he printed in the margin of his *Rashaḥāt* (pp. 2-189), he called *al-Nafā’is al-Sāniḥāt*, generally known as *Tadhyl al-Rashaḥāt* or *Dhayil al-Rashaḥāt*.³² In this manner the *Rashaḥāt* became available to the Arabic-speaking public in the

23 For the names and the number of Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī *tekkes* in Istanbul see Klaus Kreiser, “Medresen und Derwischkonvente in Istanbul: Quantitative Aspekte,” in J. L. Bacqué-Grammont, et P. Dumont, (eds.), *Economie et Sociétés dans l’Empire Ottoman*, Paris, 1983, pp. 109-119. The findings of Prof. Kreiser are corroborated one generation later by the findings of Üsküdarî Ahmed Münib in his *Mecmu‘a-i Tekâyâ*, Istanbul, A. H. 1307/1889-90.

24 For the ed. of 1890 see Story, *ibid.*, the edition of 1897 is not mentioned by him but a copy is found in the library of the University of Tübingen in Germany.

25 C. A. Story, *ibid.*, p. 965.

26 *Ibid.*

27 On Taj al-Din Zakariyya, see Le Gal, pp. 210 ff. A manuscript copy of this translation is found in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, no.: de Slane 2044.

28 On Qazāni, see his short autobiography fixed as appendix to vol. 3 of his translation of Sirhindi’s *Maktubat*, pp. 188-192.

29 See *Rashahat ‘Ain al-Hayat*, Mecca, 1890, p. 3.

30 *Ibid.*

31 See Qazāni’s autobiography (n. 28 above), p. 191.

32 See *Rashahat* (n. 29 above), p. 2 of the Table of Contents; Story, *ibid.*, p. 965; and Brocklemann, *GAL*, S. II, pp. 287-8.

Arab countries and in other Muslim lands where Arabic was more familiar than Turkish or Persian.

To conclude, *Rashahāt 'Ain al-Hayāt* was printed in many editions in the three main oriental languages during the nineteenth century. No doubt, the advent of printing had something to do with that. But the large number of editions is a clear evidence of a growing demand for the book, which in itself may point to the wide expansion of the Naqshbandī order throughout the Muslim lands, especially in Asia. It is also a sign that in the nineteenth century the Muslim world still enjoyed a strong cultural unity and that, despite European penetration into Muslim lands, it was Islamic themes that continued to sway the interest of the Muslim public.

The popularity of the book in the nineteenth century may also have been due to its major theme, i.e., the struggle of Sheikh 'Ubaid Allah Aḥrār for the supremacy of the *sharī'a* in the state as against the tendency of the Timurids in Samarqand for an arbitrary and tyrannical rule of governments.³³ The nineteenth century witnessed the rise of many such governments throughout the Muslim world. Above all, modernization and military reform provided rulers and states with much coercive power for which at the same time no checks and balances were instituted. Moreover, under pressure to introduce intensive modernizing measures, many Muslim rulers paid little attention to Islamic traditions or to the *sharī'a* and tended to neglect Muslim institutions. Such developments gave the book, whose hero worked in the defense of Islamic ideals, a special importance in the eyes of the Muslim public. It was a demonstration of their attachment to Islam and their unfailing trust in its heritage.

³³ Mansura Haider, "The Mongol Traditions and their Survival in Central Asia (XIV-XV Centuries)," *Central Asiatic Journal*, 28 (1984), 57-79.