



Ridgeon, L. (2019) 'Ajam Sufis and Shi'i spirituality in 19th century Iran. In: Hermann, D. and Terrier, M. (eds.) *Shi'i Islam and Sufism: Classical Views and Modern Perspectives*. Series: Shi'i heritage series (7). I.B. Tauris: London, pp. 305-324. ISBN 9780755602278.

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Deposited on: 20 January 2020

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# ‘Ajam Sufis and Shi‘a Spirituality in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Iran

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## **Introduction**

Scholarly attention on Sufism during the nineteenth century in Iran has in the main focused on the Ni‘matullāhī revival and its response to opposition from the clerical ranks between 1800-1850,<sup>1</sup> its subsequent growth and development under celebrated masters such as Ṣafī ‘Alī Shāh (d. 1899),<sup>2</sup> and then its splintering into several streams, all vying for the hearts and minds of Sufi sympathisers.<sup>3</sup> A lesser degree of academic interest has been paid to other Sufi orders, such as the Dhahābī,<sup>4</sup> and perhaps the order that has received the least attention is the Khāksār. This may be explained by the literary endeavours of the orders mentioned above; the masters of the Ni‘matullāhī order composed a number of works in which they elaborated upon various concerns of a Sufi nature, and this stands in complete contrast to Khāksār Sufis who have left a relatively small number of texts.<sup>5</sup> The lack of a sophisticated literature from the Khāksār Sufis is perhaps attributable to a range of factors, including the unease of these Sufis with the written

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1 In European languages the most accessible sources on the Ni‘matullāhīs are (in English) Leonard Lewisohn, “An Introduction to Modern Persian Sufism, Part I”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, 61, 3, 1998; (in German) Richard Gramlich’s three volume study should be consulted: *Die schiitischen Derwischorden Persiens* 1-3, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1965-1981. 1. Affiliationen (1965); 2. Glaube und Lehre (1976); 3. Brauchtum und Riten (1981). In Persian the literature on the Ni‘matullāhī order is considerable, partially as a result of many of their leaders composing treatises. This literature has been investigated in two PhD dissertations: William Ronald Royce, “Mīr Ma‘sum ‘Alī Shāh and the Ni‘mat Allāhī Revival 1776-77 to 1796-97: a Study of Sufism and its opponents in Late Eighteenth Century Iran,” Princeton University, 1979; Reza Tabandeh, “The Rise of Ni‘matullahi Shi‘ite Sufism in Nineteenth Century Qājār Persia”, Exeter University, 2014. In Persian see M. Humayūnī, *Ta‘rīkh-i silsilahā-yi tariqa-yi Ni‘matullāhī dar Irān*, London, 1992.

<sup>2</sup> For Ṣafī ‘Alī Shāh, see Nile Green, “A Persian Sufi in the Age of Printing: Mirza Hasan Safi ‘Ali Shah (1835-99),” in Ridgeon, Lloyd. ed., *Religion and Politics in Modern Iran*, London, 2005, 99-112. For Zāhīr al-Dawla (Ṣafī ‘Alī Shāh’s successor, and leader of the Society of Brotherhood) see Lloyd Ridgeon, “Revolution and a High Ranking Sufi: Zahir al-Dawleh’s Contribution to the Constitutional Movement,” in Chehabi, H. and Martin, V. eds., *Iran’s Constitutional Revolution*, London, 2010, 143-62; ‘Ata Karīm Barq, *Justajū dar aḥwāl wa āthār-i Ṣafī ‘Alī Shāh*, Tehran, 1352sh./1973-74.

<sup>3</sup> For a general survey into late 19th century Sufism in Iran see Lloyd Ridgeon, chapter one in *Sufi Castigator: Aḥmad Kasravi and the Iranian Mystical Tradition*, London, 2006. See also Matthijs van den Bos, *Mystic Regimes: Sufism and the State in Iran, from the Late Qajar Era to the Islamic Republic*, Leiden, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Leonard Lewisohn, “An Introduction to Modern Persian Sufism, Part II,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, 62, 1999; idem., “The *Qawā‘im al-anwār* of Rāzī Šīrāzī and Shi‘i Sufism in Qajar Persia,” in D. Hermann & F. Speziale, eds., *Muslim Cultures in the Indo-Iranian World during the Early Modern and Modern Periods*, Berlin, 2010, 247-71. In Persian see R. Khāvarī, *Dhahabiyya: Taṣawwuf-i ‘ilmī, āthār-i adabī*, Tehran, 1362sh.(?)/1983-84(?).

<sup>5</sup> For a Khāksār text that focuses on its rituals, and the various implements that make up the material culture of the Khāksār dervish, and which also reveals the nature of the author’s Shi‘a belief and spirituality, and typical Khāksār stylistics in prose and poetry see the third chapter of Mīr ‘Abidī & Mīhrān Afshārī (ed), *Āyīn-i Qalandarī*, Tehran, 1374/1995-6, pp. 247-332.

word, as one of their leading masters of the mid-nineteenth century reportedly stated, “We live as dervishes in practice, not with forms and books”.<sup>6</sup> Another reason for the lack of written sources is related to the social standing of the order, as many of the dervishes were among the working and impoverished classes who most likely did not have access to any formal education.<sup>7</sup>

In this article I shall be focusing upon a sub-order of the Khāksār, namely the ‘Ajam. The article commences by investigating the relationship the ‘Ajam had with Shī‘-ism. This is undertaken by assessing the extent to which the ‘Ajam embraced an “orthodox” form of Twelver Shi‘ism, how they presented themselves, through their own creation of their past, and the kinds of specific ritual activity that reflected the kind of attachment these Sufis had with Twelver Shi‘ism. Subsequently the article will discuss the distinctive Sufi features of the ‘Ajam, and then the social context of these Sufis is considered, in particular, the connection of the ‘Ajam with the bazaar, and their participation and leading role in public poetic competitions (*sukhanwarī*) that made the Sufis of this order well known in nineteenth century Iran.

Very little has been written about the ‘Ajam. Even the *Encyclopedia Iranica* does not contain a specific entry for this order, instead they are briefly mentioned in an article devoted to the Khāksār written by Zahra Taheri. In Persian, the ‘Ajam fare a little better, and of note is the work of Muḥammad Ja‘far Maḥjūb who composed a series of articles in the journal *Sukhan* which dealt with *sukhanwarī* (poetic compositions) and the ‘Ajam.<sup>8</sup> But the scant attention devoted to the ‘Ajam is reflected in Zarrīnkūb’s chapter on the Khāksār in *Justajū dar Taṣawwuf-i Īrān*, which contains only a single mention.<sup>9</sup> Recently interest has been focused upon the ‘Ajam in the works of Mihrān Afshārī, who edited an important ‘Ajam treatise called *Wasīlat al-najāt*, (which can be rendered as the “Tool [or means] of Salvation”).<sup>10</sup> This is a relatively short text of some thirty-nine pages. The text was composed in 1266/1887-8,<sup>11</sup> in the middle of the reign of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh (r. 1848-1896), during a period in which the influence of Western thought and science increased, and the military and economic weaknesses of Iran were becoming all too apparent. There is next to nothing known about the author except that his name was Mashhadī Muḥammad Mahdī Tabrīzī, who was an affiliate of the ‘Ajam. The

<sup>6</sup> Zahra Taheri, “KĀKSĀR,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol. XV(4), December 15, 2010, 356-359.

<sup>7</sup> See Willem Floor, “LUTĪ,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, March 15, 2010, found at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/luti> (last accessed 6.11.2014.)

<sup>8</sup> M. J. Maḥjūb, “*Sukhanwarī*,” was first published in three parts within *Sukhan* (9) 1337sh./1958, 530-5, 631-7, and 779-86. The three sections were published as one continuous article in *Adabiyāt-i ‘ammiyāna-yi Īrān*, edited by Ḥasan Dhū al-Faqārī, Tehran, 1382sh./2003-4, 1053-78.

<sup>9</sup> “Qalandar va Khāksār,” in *Justajū dar taṣawwuf-i Īrān*, Tehran, 1369/1990-1, 359-79.

<sup>10</sup> The text is in Mehrān Afshārī, ed., *Futuwwat-nāmeḥ-hā wa Rasā’il-i Khāksāriyya*, Tehran, 2003, 235-94.

<sup>11</sup> See above, *Wasīlat al-najāt*, 294, henceforth cited as W.N.

text is significant because it supplies scholars with written evidence of the Shi‘a nature of the ‘Ajam order, offers a tantalising possibility that such Sufi discourse contained aspects of Iranian nationalism, highlights the feuding and rivalry among the Sufis of late nineteenth century Iran (a problem that continued into the early twentieth century and arguably contributed to the decline and weakening of the tradition), and illustrates the close connection of this Sufi order with the bazaar. Afshārī’s attention to the ‘Ajam is also evident in his collection of four edited treatises, under the title of *Āyīn-i Qalandarī*, one of which is a *sukhanwarī* “poem”.<sup>12</sup> Afshārī’s introduction to the text includes a brief section on the ‘Ajam.<sup>13</sup> He has also published a short piece on the ‘Ajam and *sukhanwarī* in a collection of his essays, but this does add significantly to his previously published work.<sup>14</sup>

## I Shi‘ism

### 1.1 The ‘Ajam and Twelver Shi‘-ism

The Persian text of *Wasīlat al-najāt* was composed largely in prose. However, the first section of the first chapter (*maqṣad-i awwal*) is in rhyming couplets in which there is an explicit commitment to Twelver Shi‘ism. The six introductory sections are (1) an untitled section [27 couplets], (2) divine unity (*tawḥīd*) [21 couplets], (3) justice (‘*adl*) [23 couplets], (4) prophecy [18 couplets], (5) Imāmate [72 couplets], (6) the return (*ma‘ād*) which is a discussion of an eschatological nature [32 couplets]. The length of the section on Imāmate offers a clear indication of the message the author sought to convey. The couplets do not yield any original content, but simply list the names of the Imāms in chronological order, sometime using nicknames (*laqab*), and referring to events in their lives.<sup>15</sup> The couplets are not completely devoid of merit, as there are puns to help the listener memorise the text, for example:

*After [‘Alī] [is] Ḥasan, nicknamed “Mujtabā”;*

*[After him is] Ḥusayn, the king of grief and affliction (karab wa balā).*

The pun is on the words grief and affliction (*karab wa balā*), and it is the Persian words which all too readily would remind the reader/listener of the slaying of Ḥusayn at Karbala. As such,

<sup>12</sup> Mīr ‘Abidī & Mīhrān Afshārī (ed), *Āyīn-i Qalandarī*, pp. 348-450.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 336-8.

<sup>14</sup> Mīhrān Afshārī, *Tāza bi tāza, naw bi naw* (Tehran: Chishma, 1385/2006/7), pp. 111-125.

<sup>15</sup> W.N., 239.

these sections probably served as teaching materials and to reinforce standard Twelver doctrine. Moreover, the “orthodoxy” of the Sufism is evident in the author’s discussion of the superiority of the Prophets over the Imams. This most likely was to refute any accusation of (*ghuluww*) (or excessive Shi‘a belief) or even the possibility of identifying the Imams as “friends of God” who in some epochs of Sufi history have been understood as superior to the prophets.<sup>16</sup> The author remarks, “Whoever says friendship (*walāya*) is greater than prophecy is an unbeliever (*kāfir*).”<sup>17</sup> The use of *kāfir* and *kufir* occurs regularly, which may have been directed at the Sunnis: “If a person says that there was no Imam after Muṣṭafā - know that these words are *kufir*.”<sup>18</sup> The didactic nature of this section continues with reasons for the existence of Imāmate, and the author lists these as the charge (or testament) (*waṣiyat*) of Muḥammad and refers to the famous *ḥadīth* of Ghadir Khumm: “Of whomsoever I had been Master, ‘Alī here is to be his Master.”<sup>19</sup> Other reasons for belief in the Imams include their miracles (*mu‘jiza* (pl: *mu‘jizāt*)) and that they possess more virtue than other individuals.

After the introductory couplets, the rest of the first chapter is subdivided into sections that reflect the fundamentals of belief: purity (*ṭahārat*), prayer (*ṣalāt*), fasting (*ṣawm*), alms-giving (*zakāt*), paying the *khums* tax, pilgrimage (*ḥajj*), commanding the good and forbidding the evil (*amr bi ma‘rūf va nahī ‘an al-munkar*); the inner and outer struggle (*jihād*), and buying and selling (*bay‘*).<sup>20</sup> The author carefully observes the dues that have traditionally been associated with the formal Shi‘a functions of the clergy when discussing alms-tax and the *khums*. For example, he states that half of the *khums* must be given to a *mujtahid* or his representative or someone who has his permission, and the other half should go to the poor and orphans.<sup>21</sup> With regard to the *zakāt*, the author does not say who is responsible for the collection, management and distribution of the tax, he merely lists the kinds of worthy recipients, such as the poor and homeless, or says that the *zakāt* may be used to free slaves.<sup>22</sup> “Orthodox” Twelver doctrine is observed too when the author states that “*jihād* against the unbelievers (*kuffār*) is a duty only at the permission of the [twelfth] Imām.”<sup>23</sup>

The opening chapter of the text locates this form of Sufism within “orthodox” Shi‘ism, and is careful to pay respect to its leading proponents, the *mujtahids*. This may have been an

<sup>16</sup> See the discussion in Jawid Mojaddedi, *Beyond Dogma* (Oxford, 2012), 28-62.

<sup>17</sup> W.N., 241.

<sup>18</sup> W.N., 240.

<sup>19</sup> This tradition is affirmed by a number of Sunni scholars including Ibn Ḥanbal in his *Musnad*, vol 4, 281 (Cairo: Maṭba‘a al-Maymāniyya, 1313/1896).

<sup>20</sup> W.N., 244-55.

<sup>21</sup> W.N., 251.

<sup>22</sup> W.N. 250.

<sup>23</sup> W.N., 252.

attempt to place ‘Ajam Sufis squarely within Qājār society without the kind of trepidation experienced by Sufis under the Safavids (1501-1722).<sup>24</sup> This amalgamation of Sufism and Shi‘ism is continued later on in the text, in particular with the myths relating to the origins of the ‘Ajam.

## 1.2 Origin of the ‘Ajam and its Shi‘i Orientation

The origins of the Khāksār are not completely clear, as Taheri has observed, the way that they have reported their history: “is replete with fanciful tales and mythologies, conveyed in oral narratives, the origins of which are thus difficult to trace.”<sup>25</sup> Zarrīnkūb argued that the origin of the Khāksār rested in an off-shoot of Jalāli Sufism at the beginning of the Qājār period, and which had strong Shi‘i tendencies.<sup>26</sup> The history of the ‘Ajam, likewise, is difficult to reconstruct, but the author of *Wasīlat al-najāt* offers an interesting take on its origins. The opening of the fifth chapter (which is composed of twenty-five questions and answers) asks about the origins of the ‘Ajam dervishes, and the author tells a story of a certain “Ḥabīb-i Barqānī<sup>27</sup> of Qazwīn” who was a lover or devotee of Imām ‘Alī. Ḥabīb read his poetry in which he described his economic difficulties in ‘Ajam (or Persia). ‘Alī told Ḥabīb to recite his panegyric poetry in every city (*shahr*) and land (*bilād*) to which he travelled. Although the historicity of the account is highly dubious,<sup>28</sup> this brief history has three significant elements: first, it connects the ‘Ajam with Shi‘ism, second it includes an association with the practice of *sukhanwarī* (which was one of the distinguishing features of this order of Sufis, see below), and third there is a link between the ‘Ajam Sufis and the country of Iran (which becomes clearer later in the text).

The connection with Shi‘ism is further highlighted in the very second question of the fifth chapter, which asks about the seventeen affiliated guilds (*hifdah silsila*)<sup>29</sup> and which will be discussed below.<sup>30</sup> The story begins with Āzād Khān (d. 1781); it is assumed that the

<sup>24</sup> Said Amir Arjomand, “Religious extremism (*Ghuluww*), Sufism and Sunnism in Safavid Iran: 1501-1722,” *Journal of Asian History*, 15(1), 1981, 1-35.; Andrew Newman, “Sufism and Anti-Sufism in Safavid Iran,” *Iran*, 37, 1999, 95-108; Lloyd Ridgeon, *Morals and Mysticism in Persian Sufism*, London, 2010, 123-65.

<sup>25</sup> Taheri, “KĀKSĀR”.

<sup>26</sup> Zarrīnkūb, *Justajū dar taṣawwuf-i Irān*, (third edition) Tehran, 1367/1988-9, 376.

<sup>27</sup> Mehrān Afshārī suggests that the text should read Baraghānī, as Baraghānī is a mountainous region between Karaj and Qazwīn (W.N., 280, n.3).

<sup>28</sup> For classical Sufi understandings of Ḥabīb-i ‘Ajamī see ‘Aṭṭār, *Memorial of God’s Friends*, translated by Paul Losensky, New York, 2009, 90-6. For Hujwīrī on Ḥabīb-i ‘Ajamī see *Kashf al-Mahjūb of Al-Hujwiri: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism*, translated by R.A. Nicholson, London, 1911, 88-9.

<sup>29</sup> On the symbolism of seventeen among Sufi Persian groups, see Lloyd Ridgeon, *Morals and Mysticism*, 137, 139, 144.

<sup>30</sup> W.N., 280.

audience would have been familiar with this Sunni commander who emerged in Iran after the death of Nādir Shāh. Āzād Khān the Afghān is ritually cursed by the author of the text, and we learn that he captured and occupied Isfahan. He ordered that the name of ‘Alī be painted on horses’ hooves, so that it would be trod underfoot. All of the Shi‘as in the city observed dissimulation (*taqiyya*) and wore Afghan clothes and they did not have the courage to mention ‘Alī’s name. At this point, a dervish (who was “one of the descendants (*awlād*) of Ḥabīb-i ‘Ajam”) called Waḥshī came to Isfahan with the aim of calling out the name of ‘Alī in the streets and bazaar. Sixteen other Shi‘a dervishes were told of his plan, each one coming from a different guild (*ṣinf*), and they all took an oath to carry out Waḥshī’s plan. The next morning they all set off together, each one in a white shroud and hat (*tāj*), carrying a small axe (*tabarzīn*), and each one poured earth over his head (*khāk bar sar-i khūd*) symbolising the preparedness to face death. Each one praised the virtues of ‘Alī, chanting out loud “Yā ‘Alī!”. Āzād Khān ordered their capture, but the seventeen informed other dervishes who were also prepared to sacrifice themselves and they all spilled into the streets, captured and killed Āzād Khān and put Ismā‘īl Shāh on the throne.<sup>31</sup>

This passage attempts to set ‘Ajam Sufis securely within a normative Twelver tradition, and one that actively positions the faith against the Sunni tradition. Yet the author does not wish to depict a simple Shī‘i insurrection. These seventeen individuals are dervishes, and they wear identifiable Sufi hats and carry distinctive Sufi tools. Moreover, the seventeen guilds provide evidence of the close connections the ‘Ajam enjoyed with the bazaar.

### 1.3 ‘Ajam and Shi‘i Pilgrimage

Whereas many Sufi orders trace their descent back to a founder and perform pilgrimages to the tomb of the individual associated with the creation of the *silsila*, the vague origins of the ‘Ajam meant that the dervishes of this order were unable to engage in visitations to a “Sufi” tomb that was specific to them. As we have seen, the ‘Ajam highlighted the significance of both Ḥabīb ‘Ajamī who is known to have settled in Basra (and most likely died there) and a dervish by the name of Waḥshī who does not appear in books on tazkira Sufi literature, and is most likely a

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<sup>31</sup> In his entry in the *Encyclopedia Iranica*, entitled “ĀZĀD KHAN AFGĀN ” (Vol. III, Fasc. 2, pp. 173-174), J. R. Perry states, “[Āzād Khān Afghān] ended his days comfortably in Shiraz as an honoured pensioner of the generous Zand ruler, and on his death in 1195/1781 was taken to Kabul to be buried in accordance with his will,” which contradicts the “history” of the author of *Wasīlat al-najāt*. The intended identity of Ismā‘īl Shāh in the story is probably the infant Shāh Ismā‘īl III, the grandson of the last Safavid King who was put on the throne in 1757 by Karīm Khān.

mythical figure. In other words, the ‘Ajam had nothing comparable to the Ni‘matullāhīs.<sup>32</sup> Visitation to tombs was important because it promoted not only the specific ritual activity of the order, but also the formation of identity and the sense of cohesion within the order by establishing an “orthodox” belief and practice. Guidance and education were frequently provided at the tombs of leading Sufis, and those that were “adopted” by the ‘Ajam Sufis served this purpose. These sites usually, though not in all cases, were the location of the tombs of important individuals who were more commonly identified within the Twelver Shi‘i tradition. *Wasīlat al-najāt* lists seven sacred sites where advanced ‘Ajam Sufis (those dervishes of choice or volition, known as “*Ikhtiyārī*”) must be taught. The author says, “[One] must guide the *Ikhtiyārī* in the seven cities of Iran which have been under the control of Iran, not by the rulers of other countries.”<sup>33</sup> The first of these is the city of Mashhad in which is the tomb of the eighth Imām, Alī ibn Mūsā Riḍā. The second is Tabriz, because it will be the location of the arrival of the Qā‘im (*qadamgāh-i qā‘im-i āl-i muḥammad*) (i.e. the Twelfth Imam). Third is Shirāz because it was the capital of Shāh Chirāgh, the elder brother of eighth Imam. Fourth is Ardabil because it was the capital of Shaykh Ṣafī (d. 1334) to whom origins of the Safavid order is traced.<sup>34</sup> Fifth is Isfahan because it was the capital of the Safavid monarchs. Unfortunately the text does not elaborate further in this. Sixth is Qazwīn, because it was the capital of Prince Ḥusayn (the son of the eighth Imam) but again the text does not specify any visit to the Imāmzāda Ḥusayn.<sup>35</sup> Seventh is Tehran because it is the capital of the monarchs who are the “possessors of splendour” (*pādshāhān-i šāḥib-i sikka*). Again, the text does not mention specific tombs as locations of pilgrimage such as Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azim in the south of Tehran.

The list above is worthwhile of reflection because it bears the imprint of only one individual whose tomb is recognised as largely of Sufi veneration (that of Shaykh Ṣafī). While the tomb of Shāh Chirāgh is often considered a Sufi sacred site, the author makes a specific connection to its Shi‘i heritage. Perhaps the most intriguing site is Tehran: the term *šāḥib-i sikka* is awkward to translate, as *sikka* is more commonly understood as a coin. It reflects, perhaps, a nod by the ‘Ajam to the secular Qājār rulers. The list is specifically Persian and Iranian. Persian in the respect that the main language spoken in Iran is Persian (although Azeri

<sup>32</sup> The Ni‘matullāhīs in Mahān is famous for the tomb of Shāh Ni‘matullāh. See Bastani Parizi, “Haram-i Shāh Walī chigūna idāra mīshūd?” in Shahrām Pākūzī (ed), *Majmū‘ih-yi Maqālāt darbari-yi Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī*, Tehran 2003.

<sup>33</sup> W.N., 284.

<sup>34</sup> For the shrine at Ardabīl see A. H. Morton, “The Ardabīl Shrine in the Reign of Shāh Tahmāsp,” *Iran*, 12, 1974, pp. 31-64, and *Iran* 13, 1975, pp. 39-58.

<sup>35</sup> Qazwīn is the location of the so-called “Imāmzāda-yi Ḥusayn” which was constructed in the 16th century and renovated in the Qājār period. A contemporary image is contained in Eugene Flandin, *Voyage en Perse*, éd. Gide et Baudry, Paris, 1851.



is the native language in the North-West), a point that becomes significant in the light of the oratory competitions in which the ‘Ajam were engaged. Visits to locations outside of Iran where Arabic or Turkish was spoken might have belittled the importance of Farsī, and thus weakened the ‘Ajam ritual of *sukhanwarī*. The list of sacred sites is Iranian in the sense that all of them are within the jurisdiction of the Shi‘i Qājār rulers. The tombs of other revered individuals, such as the tombs of Imām ‘Alī or Imām Ḥusayn were located in Ottoman territories where Arabic was the lingua franca, which given the often fraught relationship between the Ottoman and Qājār dynasties during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, might have been difficult to reach.

## 2 The Sufi Nature of *Wasīlat al-najāt*

A feature that re-occurs in *Wasīlat al-najāt* is the insistence on observing the regulations of the *sharī‘at* (i.e. the legal aspect of religion). A typical example is when the author states at the beginning of chapter three that the wayfarer (*sālik*), a term denoting a Sufi devotee, must not refute the *sharī‘at* of Muḥammad, and must learn and put into practice its duties and religion, and then he may “step on to the [Sufi] path (*ṭarīqat*); without the *sharī‘at* the *ṭarīqat* is *ḥarām* (or forbidden) for him.”<sup>36</sup> Such a perspective is in fact quite a usual position within Sufi thinking, as many Persian Sufi masters have advocated such a view, and indeed, may even be said to reflect the vast majority of Sufi perspectives. That the author felt the need to state such an accepted position suggests that the comment was directed at ignorant, aspiring dervishes or else the order’s detractors. Having established this basic rule for novices, the author then proceeds to discuss the absolute requirement for a guide (*murshid*), and cites in Arabic a sentence he attributes to Muḥammad, “If not for my guide I would not know my Lord.”<sup>37</sup> Again this is a standard Sufi perspective, and many of the manuals and authoritative texts from the classical period testify to this view.

One of the points of interest in the text is the absence of any theoretical discussion about “mystical” states, or gnosis.<sup>38</sup> The concepts of passing away or annihilation (*fanā*) and subsistence (*baqā*) are not considered, nor is there any extended examination of unity (*waḥdat*,

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<sup>36</sup> W. N., 255.

<sup>37</sup> W.N., 256 which is repeated on page 267 and 274.

<sup>38</sup> The ‘Ajam certainly had doctrines of a mystical nature. See M.A. Amir Moezzi, *The Spirituality of Shi‘i Islam: Belief and Practices*, London, 2011, pp. 364-5. Moezzi discusses the works of Sayyid Aḥmad Dehkordī (d 1339/1920), in which there is a seven-fold hierarchy of mystical attainment.

*ittiṣāl*, or similar terms) as might be expected of Sufis interested in the school of the Unity of Being that is associated with Ibn ‘Arabī. *Wasīlat al-najāt* offers a mere hint of speculative mysticism when the author speaks of the twelve stations of the *Ikhtiyārī* dervish. The first of these includes firstly the knowledge of the secrets in the stage of singularity and solitude (*tafrīd wa tajrīd*) and secondly the belief in unity (*tawhīd*), and thirdly the remembrance of “There is no god but God.” Unfortunately, how these technical terms and concepts were understood is not explained: whether God’s unity was understood in a *wujūdī* fashion,<sup>39</sup> or whether it preserved and fore-grounded an ontological difference between Creator and created cannot be established. In any case, the purpose of the text appears to have been the propagation of ‘Ajam doctrines as they relate to origins, its internal hierarchical structure, and its position within the Shi‘i tradition. However, the absence of speculative gnosis may also be due to the kind of people who were associated with the ‘Ajam, namely the working classes and those who were occupied in the bazaar. These kinds of people probably did not have much formal education and were unfamiliar with the intricacies of theological and speculative disputation. Despite this, it is likely that there were some affiliates of the ‘Ajam who had a reasonable degree of literary ability, as the text includes Arabic quotations from the Qur’ān.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, those who engaged in *sukhanwarī* were obliged to recite, and perhaps even compose difficult kinds of poetry.

That there is very little of “mystical” interest in the text may be associated with the origins and appeal of the ‘Ajam, which as mentioned before lies with the working classes. An indication of this is given in a “Khāksār” treatise from the Qājār period which discusses the seventeen guilds that trace their origins back to the girding of Imām ‘Alī.<sup>41</sup> The ninth person that was girded was Ḥasan-i Baṣrī and the author states that the ‘Ajam dervishes and the ruffians (*lūṭī-hā*) trace themselves back to him.<sup>42</sup> The nature of this connection with the ruffians may be suggestive of the kinds of individuals that were associated with the ‘Ajam. The other

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<sup>39</sup> That is to say, in a fashion that was influenced by the school of Ibn ‘Arabī, that is commonly associated with *Waḥdat al-wujūd*.

<sup>40</sup> W.N, 268.

<sup>41</sup> Although the treatise does not specifically identify itself as a Khāksār work, it is a common feature of Khāksār works that such issues are discussed.

<sup>42</sup> “*Risāla dar bayān-i aṣnāf*,” in *Futuwwat-nāmah-hā wa Rasā’il-i Khāksāriyya*, 221. *Lūṭīs* became associated with *futuwwat* most probably because of the inclusion of toughs and wrestling heroes like Pūryā-yi Valī (d. 1322) who is a household name in Iran. Pūryā-yi Valī was also the author of poetry addressing Sufi themes. Angelo Piemontese, “La leggenda del santo-lottatore Pahlavan Mahmud Xvarezmī ‘Purya-ye Vali’ (m. 722/1322),” *Annali dell’Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli*, NS, 15 (1965): 167-213. For the poetry of Purya-ye Vali see Hamid Hamid, *Zindagī wa rūzgār wa andīshah-i Pūriyā-yi Valī, Pahlavān Maḥmūd Khvārazmī, bā matn-i intiqādī-i Kanz al-ḥaqā’iq*. Tehran, 1964. In short, the ideal *lūṭī*, like the *pahlavān* (or wrestling champion), used force and violence in an appropriate fashion and did not resort to acts of extortion, bribery and thuggery. It is likely that for this reason that such individuals were included in such treatises.

sixteen of the seventeen guilds mentioned in this Khāksār treatise are the barbers, the water bearers, the surgeons, the worshippers (*‘abidān*), the rope-makers, the shoemakers, the merchants and traders, the quilt-makers, tent-sewers, the recitors of *dhikr* and ascetics, the generous (*karīmān*), the artisans (*ahl-i ṣan‘at*), the knowledgeable (*‘ilm-dārān*), the Qur’ān memorisers (*ḥāfīzān-i Qur’ān*), and bowl and dish makers.<sup>43</sup> The collection of groups assembled in this treatise are a little more distinguished than the seventeen trades mentioned in *Wasīlat al-najāt*; these were the water bearers, grocers, chefs, directors of traditional exercises (*kuhna sawār*), cobblers, masters of the bath, caravan leaders, Qur’ān recitors, butchers, smiths, bakers, wrestlers, saddlers, barbers, callers to prayer and the lamentation recitors, and the *Naqībs*. But the common element does seem to suggest a lower or working class support base, which the ‘Ajām shared in common with the Khāksār. All of this reveals the intimate connections that these Sufis had with the bazaar, and it is noteworthy that the author remarks that all of the ‘Ajām dervishes are drawn from the seventeen families (*hifdah silsila*).<sup>44</sup> Moreover, on initiation into the order, the representatives of the seventeen “families” (as listed above) were present.<sup>45</sup>

Despite the close relationship between the ‘Ajām and the Khāksār,<sup>46</sup> *Wasīlat al-najāt* includes some intriguing passages that reveal that the ties between the two were not always cordial. The third question and answer of the fifth chapter in *Wasīlat al-najāt* distances the ‘Ajām from the Khāksār, and another group that the author (Mashhadī Muḥammad Mahdī Tabrīzī) calls *Sālik*. The Khāksār are said to derive their origin from Shāh Ni‘matullāh (d. 1431), who is lauded by Tabrīzī (as he is accorded the salutation “may God raise his station”), while the *Sāliks* are said to find their origins in Jalāl al-Dīn Harātī.<sup>47</sup> Tabrīzī finds the *Sāliks* deficient to the extent that they should not teach other Sufis, nor should they preach in public. They should be reclusive and perform their litanies.<sup>48</sup> But it is the Khāksār who receive the strongest criticism:

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<sup>43</sup> W.N., 221.2.

<sup>44</sup> W.N., 290.

<sup>45</sup> W.N., 258.

<sup>46</sup> Nūr-al-Dīn Mudarrasī Chahārdahī, *Khāksār wa Ahl-i ḥaqq*, Tehran, 1358sh./1979-80. See his discussion on the ‘Ajām, from page 49-106. Afshārī claims that the ‘Ajām dervishes were described as the servants of the Khāksār, and carried out the orders and wishes of Khāksār masters. Moreover, the courtesies and customs of the ‘Ajām were similar to those of the Khāksār (Afshārī, 282-3, n.6). There are many cases of similarities between the ‘Ajām and Khāksār. While the ‘Ajām of *Wasīlat al-najāt* pay special attention to Ḥabīb ‘Ajāmī, the Khāksār regard him as the deputy (*khalīfa*) of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, who they consider as one of their “four *pīrs*”, see Afshārī, W.N., 209.

<sup>47</sup> The identity of this individual is uncertain. Zarrīnkūb has made a connection between the Khāksār and one Ghulām ‘Alī Shāh Hindī who lived at the end of the Zand period or beginning of the Qājār era. Very little is known about him. See Zarrīnkūb, *Justajū dar taṣawwuf-i Irān*, 375-6.

<sup>48</sup> W.N. 290.

The Khāksār is a *ṭarīqa* that has gone wrong (*bāṭil*) because [the members] are innovators and they deny the *sharīʿat* of Muḥammad Muṣṭafā. [They] are not on the straight path of the religious school (*mazhab*) of Imām Jaʿfar al-Šādiq and they do not assert the prophetic *sharīʿat*, rather they deny it and say, “We are followers of the *ṭarīqa*; the *sharīʿat* is cut away (*sāqit*) from us.” They do not pray and they do not fast. They do not marry ... they do not greet [others with] “Salām”. They say, “With the help of ʿAlī (*yā ʿAlī madad*),” instead of “Salām”. When it is time to eat they do not say, “In the name of God”, and when they have finished eating they do not give thanks to God. So they are not followers of the *sharīʿat* and they have taken and walk along the wrong path. They are masters of innovation (*ṣāhib-i bidʿat*).<sup>49</sup>

The author reiterates his opposition to the Khāksārs in his answer to the question of whether a Khāksār can become an ʿAjam dervish. He answers that if the dervish in question does not realise he is acting in opposition to the prophetic *sharīʿa* then there is no fault in admitting him into the order. He is admitted in the usual way: his head is shaved, taken to the bath where he performs ablutions for joining the order (*ghusl-i ṭarīqat*). If such a dervish wishes to become an ʿAjam Sufi and realises he is denying the prophetic *sharīʿa* then he cannot be admitted.

There is no indication of the reason behind this dispute between the ʿAjam and the Khāksār; it is possible that it was a local rivalry, or dispute about doctrine, or perhaps a conflict of leadership in the group, similar to that which beset the Niʿmatullāhīs in the early twentieth century. Whatever the case, it is an example of a tendency among Sufi orders to splinter and develop off-shoots which carry with it the possibility of creating new identities that are responsive to changing contexts.

As mentioned above much of Tabrīzī’s *Wasīlat al-najāt* is concerned with explicating the hierarchy of the order, in which there are specific terms for the ranks of spiritual attainment. These begin with the novices, or the *kūdak-i abdāl* (child devotee) who carry out the orders of the other dervishes.<sup>50</sup> The hierarchy develops with masters of tongue, or novices who wish to make a pledge of the tongue (*ṣāhib-i lisān*) to the ʿAjam master. These are of two kinds: the tongue of flight (*lisān-i parvāzī*) and the Tongue of Service (*lisān-i khidmat*).<sup>51</sup> The difference between the two is that the *lisān-i parvāzī* is able to engage in his profession or trade after

<sup>49</sup> W.N. 282. See also the comments on page 288, where the repentance of the Khāksār is not accepted if he wishes to become an ʿAjam Sufi.

<sup>50</sup> Mahjūb, 1072. See Afshārī’s comments, W.N., 257, n.4.

<sup>51</sup> W.N., 256-7.

giving his oath to the spiritual master. The *lisān-i khidmat* occupies himself in serving the spiritual master after giving his oath. It appears that the term of service for the *lisān-i khidmat* was three years and three days.<sup>52</sup> The ranks of the ‘Ajam are provided in a short but clear passage in the text: “The *lisān-i khidmat* is the deputy (*nā`ib*) of the soldier or warrior (*qazāvat*) and the *qazāvat* is the deputy of the solitary one (*mufrid*), and the *mufrid* is the deputy of the dervish of free choice (*ikhtiyār*)<sup>53</sup>. The *ikhtiyār* is the deputy of the Superintendent (*sar-kār naqīb*).”<sup>54</sup> Each of these have specific spiritual stations, and they are given specific Sufi implements, so that for example, the tools (*wasīla*) of the *mufrid* are the hat (*tāj*), tablecloth (*sufra*), small axe (*tarbarzin*), begging bowl (*kashkūl*), shroud (*ihrāmī*), staff (*‘asā*), the rope of forty threads to tie around the headgear (*chihiltār*) and the coloured shawl (*rashm-i katība*).<sup>55</sup>

Of particular interest within Sufism of nineteenth century Iran was the institutionalisation of the tradition which mirrored the practice of the Shi‘i *‘ulamā* in issuing certificates which legitimised and authenticated the learning beneath a cleric. This certificate was known as an *ijāza* (literally meaning permission - that is the recipient was allowed to transmit a text that had been memorised, and even teach law and issue legal opinions).<sup>56</sup> By the nineteenth century the practice of authenticating the learning and ability of Sufis through issuing certificates, known as *majallā* became widespread among ‘Ajam and Khāksār Sufis. Afshārī notes that these took the form of hand-written documents that the dervishes would carry with them whenever they went to a new location. Among the Khāksār was a high-ranking Sufi called a *naqīb*, who had the authority to inspect the *majallā* and ask the dervishes about the secrets of the path. The *naqīb* would remove the cloak from any dervish whose *majallā* was defective or could not answer his questions.<sup>57</sup> In effect this was a form of self-regulation. It meant that the ‘Ajam dervishes were knowledgeable of their tradition, and that they conformed to a form of Sufism that was located within Twelver Shi‘ism. *Wasīlat al-najāt* includes sections that discuss the granting of such certificates to ‘Ajam dervishes.

The Sufi nature of *Wasīlat al-najāt* is beyond doubt. While the term technical Sufi does not appear, other idiomatic Sufi words occur frequently, including *dervīsh* and *ṭarīqa*, and distinctive Sufi implements are discussed, such as the *kashkūl* (the begging bowl) and *tabarzīn*

<sup>52</sup> W.N. 277.

<sup>53</sup> Mahjūb, 1072. The *ikhtiyār* is able to train an aspiring *darvīsh*.

<sup>54</sup> W.N., 273. Mahjūb says that there was a seven-fold hierarchical structure: *abdāl*, *mufrid*, *qaṣṣāb*, *darvīsh-i ikhtiyār*, *‘ilm-dār*, *dast-i naqīb*, and *naqīb*.

<sup>55</sup> W.N., 285.

<sup>56</sup> See Devin J Stewart, “Ejāza” in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 2011, Vol. VIII, Fasc. 3, pp. 273-275.

<sup>57</sup> Afshārī’s comments, W.N., 256, n.5.

<sup>57</sup> W.N. See Afshārī’s comments, V.N., 256, n.5.

(small axe). Although the daily activities that the ‘Ajam should perform are not mentioned, the ritual initiation and progress through the hierarchical ranks of the order are discussed, which give some indication of the kinds of ritual activities that were performed by the Sufis of this order. There is a mention of begging in the bazaar (*parsa-yi bāzār*), which as Afshārī notes was performed by Khāksār dervishes in the bazaar on Friday evenings.<sup>58</sup> ‘Ajam dervishes also engaged in a kind of public recitation and praising of the Imāms, known as *guzar khwānī*,<sup>59</sup> and helped with some kind of public performance (*pīshkār-i maraka*), probably related to the propagation and praise of Twelver Shi‘ism (could you explain a little this relation?).<sup>60</sup> Also of note are forms of rituals known as *kharman* (literally harvest or reaper corn) which Afshārī explains is probably a form of begging, which probably had its origins in rural areas.<sup>61</sup> There is also mention of the more general forms of accepted “Sufi” manners, most notably the right behaviour towards God's creation and abandoning all kinds of blameworthy actions.<sup>62</sup> Such mental attitudes are not explained further, but there are indications that these would have been somewhat demanding, as the author mentions forty-four stations (*maqām*) which would have entailed the requisite spiritual qualities and virtues. But there is no mention of formal *dhikr* sessions or *samā‘* performances, neither is discussion of any of the more “outlandish” kinds of acts that are sometimes associated with Sufism.

### 3 The ‘Ajam and *Sukhanwarī*

Tabrīzī's *Wasīlat al-najāt* does not give any information about the *sukhanwarī*, a practice that has been highlighted by Maḥjūb and mentioned briefly in passing by several other scholars. (The most notable are the works of Bayḍā'ī, who links the Khāksār with the practice of water-carrying<sup>63</sup> and *sukhanwarī*,<sup>64</sup> and Afshārī, whose works have already been referenced). So for the sake of providing a degree of comprehensive coverage on the ‘Ajam, this section will summarize and describe Maḥjūb's work.

<sup>58</sup> W.N. 272, also see note 272-3, n.9.

<sup>59</sup> W.N. 272.

<sup>60</sup> W.N. 275

<sup>61</sup> W.N. 272, also see note 272-3, n.8. Although not a public ritual activity, but certainly a ritual that contributed to Sufi identity was tattooing known as *gul-gīrī* (literally, picking flowers) [W.N., 272.]. It appears that dervishes had tattoos made on their arms by branding them with hot coins.

<sup>62</sup> W.N. 269.

<sup>63</sup> See Mojtaba Zarvani & Mohammad Mashhadi, “The Rite of the Water-Carrier: From the circles of Sufis to the Rituals of Muharram,” *Journal of Shi‘a Islamic Studies*, 2011, IV.1, pp. 23-46.

<sup>64</sup> Ḥusayn Partaw Bayḍā'ī, *Tarīkh-i Warzish-i Bāstānī* (History of Ancient Sport) (Tehran: Zuwwar, 1382/2003-4), pp. 45-6.

The apogee of these competitions was during the nineteenth century, and they were held in coffee houses (Maḥjūb mentions fifty in Tehran alone<sup>65</sup>) which were popular among the working classes and guild workers in the latter half of the reign of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh. It was during the month of Ramadan, from nightfall until morning prayers, when these competitions occurred. At other times of the year, the participants would have been busy in their occupation, and they would have spent their free moments memorizing the poetry that was necessary for success in *sukhanwarī*. Those engaged in the competition were the ‘Ajam dervishes, and around twenty recitors of poetry would have gathered at any coffee-house. Their aim was not commercial, as they did not collect or expect payment; the aim was most probably religious in nature, although an element of showmanship and entertainment cannot be discounted from these performances. The oratory competition sometimes took the form of engagements between the groups of recitors that were affiliated to different coffee-houses. This was all performed with appropriate respect and as mentioned above, during Ramadan, when sentiments of spirituality were heightened.

The competitive nature of the poetic recitations featured around the knowledge of the “seventeen guilds”. Each of the guilds had a distinctive symbol or implement which was used in the profession, and these were used in the decoration of the coffee-house (along with particular animal skins) which were fastened to the walls and ceilings of the coffee-house during Ramadan. The competition revolved around a series of questions and answers (to be rendered in poetry) between the recitors which largely focused upon the mythical histories, “secrets” and implements of these seventeen guilds.<sup>66</sup> Each guild had its own mythic history, its “patron-saint” with specific association to the guild, and particular secrets pertaining to the trade.<sup>67</sup> The knowledge that an oratory-recitor required therefore was vast. Moreover, it should not be assumed that the recitors were all simpletons, as the recitations frequently involved complex compositions, such as the recitation of ghazals before the competition proper

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<sup>65</sup> Maḥjūb, 1056; On coffee-houses, see ‘Alī Bolūkbāshī, *Qahwa-khāna-hā-yi Īrān*, Tehran, 1375sh./1996-97. This work does not elaborate on *sukhanwarī*.

<sup>66</sup> Maḥjūb, “*Sukhanwarī*”, (1060) has listed these seventeen guilds as: (1) dervish; (2) lamentation-recitor (*rawḍa-khwān*); (3) caravan leader; (4) water-bearer; (5) usher (*nishān kursī bābā*); (6) traditional sports champion (*pahlawān*); (7) grain-sifter (*būjār*); (8) *shāṭir* - [there were different kinds of occupations that went by this name. There were *shāṭir* who placed bread in ovens, those who were messengers, those who were spies and worked for the government (9) night-watch (*shab-raw*); (10) escorts for retinues (*shāṭir-i jilaw-dār*); (11) smith; (12) muleteer; (13) butcher; (14) tent-maker; (15) washer of the dead; (16) barber; (17) coffee-maker.

<sup>67</sup> The patron-saints, histories and their secrets are contained in “*futuwwat-nāma*” (or guild-treatises) which date from around the beginning of the Safavid period until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A number of these have been edited and published by Mhrān Afshārī in his edited work *Futuwwat-nāma-hā*.

commenced that were made up of letters without dots, or without the *alif*.<sup>68</sup> There were other forms of word play within the poetry of *sukhanwarī*, including forms of acrostic poetry.<sup>69</sup> Not all questions asked were related to the seventeen families, as Maḥjūb has claimed that it was religion in general that was the subject of many such questions that were posed in poetic form. He gives the example of a recitor asking how many creatures were created without a mother or father. The answer is Adam, Eve, a she camel produced by God for the prophet Sāliḥ (Q. 7.73), the ram sent by God to Abraham as a substitute sacrifice for his son, and Moses' staff that was transformed into a snake.<sup>70</sup>

Perhaps the significance of this activity of the 'Ajam dervishes is how *sukhanwarī* demonstrated the integration of Sufism within society, in particular within the bazaar. Sufism has always had strong connections with the market place, and to view the tradition as "navel-gazing" and divorced from social realities would be to misrepresent a long standing engagement of groups such as *futuwwat*,<sup>71</sup> orders including the Mevleviyya among others, whose masters have promoted participation of tradesmen and workers. The strong links with the bazaar may also have persuaded the 'Ajam dervishes (if any encouragement was needed) of the respect and deference to Twelver Shi'ism, as the connections between the bazaar and Shi'i clerics have often been noted.<sup>72</sup>

The nature of *sukhanwarī* changed in the twentieth century. There were more questions of a scientific nature, such as those on astronomy. Moreover, some of the poetic competitions became infused with foreign words, to the extent that one recitor spoke of "seventeen languages" and included Indian, Ethiopian, Russian, French and English. There were, of course, other challenges that *sukhanwarī* faced, including the strong competition from new forms of entertainment that became popular in Iran as a result of increasing contact with the West. These included new sports (which had arguably had a detrimental impact on the traditional forms of "martial" engagement in the *zūrkhāna* - and it is worthy to note that one of the seventeen "guild" members" was the *kuhna sawar*, who lead the group exercises in this

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<sup>68</sup> Maḥjūb, "Sukhanwarī", 1063.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 1065.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 1075.

<sup>71</sup> For the tradition of *futuwwat* (or *jawānmardī*) in Iran see Ridgeon, *Morals and Mysticism*.

<sup>72</sup> An interesting example in this respect, and not too far in time from when *Wasīlat al-najāt* was written, is the dispute of over the Tobacco Concession in 1891. On this, see Nikki Keddie, *Religion and Rebellion in Iran: The Tobacco Protest of 1891-92*, London, 1966.



institution),<sup>73</sup> and the emergence of the cinema and radio.<sup>74</sup> Moreover the impact of "rationalising" Westernising thought may also be associated with the numerical decline of Sufis, and the changing nature of modes of economic activity also must have been detrimental to the 'Ajam order and its associations with the workers in the bazaar.

## 4 Conclusion

The 'Ajam offer an insight into Shi'ī spirituality in late 19th century Iran, a period in which all manner of transformations were taking place within society due to increasing education, advances in technology, and better mobility among a host of other changes. The challenges to Sufism at this juncture of history were considerable, and may have contributed to the 'Ajam Sufis locating their devotional activities and beliefs within "normative" Twelver doctrines. The absence of mystical themes in the text of *Wasilat al-Najāt* may also reflect this, but it is also possible that the contents of this 'Ajam text, being oriented towards affiliates who came from the less well educated, did not facilitate gnostic themes. Of greater concern were ethical and ritual considerations, along with a care to establish correct 'Ajam history along with the strict hierarchy among its members. It is surprising that the text makes no reference to *sukhanwarī*; perhaps the author expected his readers to automatically make an association with the tradition and had nothing new to write on the topic. The inclusion of the 'Ajam and Khāksār dervishes is imperative if Iranian spirituality in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is to be fully appreciated. The focus on Ni'mitullāhī Sufism, while worthy and necessary, has overshadowed the other forms of Sufism in Iran in this period, and it is fortunate that texts such as *Wasilat al-Najāt* have survived to provide modern observers with a wider perspective. It provides an excellent illustration of how Sufism was manifested within the lower classes of society, and as such, offers an interesting contrast to the aristocratic varieties of Sufism in Iran during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, typified by the likes of Żāhir al-Dawla (d. 1924) and the Society of Brotherhood (*anjuman-i ukhuwwat*).<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> On the *zūrkhāna* in the modern period see Ridgeon, Lloyd. "The Zūrkhāna Between Tradition and Change," *Iran*, XLV, 2007, 243-66; see also Chehabi, Houshang. "Zūrkhāna," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, X, second edition, (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 52-4; Rochard, Philippe. "The Identities of the Iranian Zūrkhāna," *Iranian Studies*, 35(4), 2002, 313-40.

<sup>74</sup> For the cinema in Iran see Gaffary, Farrokh. "CINEMA: i. History of Cinema in Persia," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, V(6), 1991, 567-72.

<sup>75</sup> For Żāhir al-Dawla and the Society of Brotherhood see Lloyd Ridgeon, "Revolution and a High Ranking Sufi: Zahir al-Dawleh's Contribution to the Constitutional Movement," in H. Chehabi and V. Martin, eds., *Iran's Constitutional Revolution*, London, 2010, pp. 143-62.



## **Appendix: Contents of *Wasīlat al-najāt***

1 First Chapter/Aim (*maqṣad-i awwal*): The Courtesies of the principles of religion (*ādāb-i aṣūl-i dīn*)

First section (*bāb-i awwal*): Second section: Unity (*bāb-i duwwum: tawḥīd*); Third Section: Justice (*bāb-i siyyum: ‘adl*); Fourth Section: prophecy (*bāb-i chahārum: nubuwwat*); Fifth Section on the Imāmate (*bāb-i panjum: imāmat*); Sixth Section on the Return (*bāb-i shīshum: ma‘ād*).

2 Second Chapter/Aim (*maqṣad-i duvvum*): The Rules of Prayer (*aḥkām-i namāz*)

First Section: purity (*bāb-i awwal: ṭahārat*); Second Section: Prayer (*bāb-i duwwum: ṣalāt*); Third section: fasting (*bāb-i siyyum: ṣawm*); Fourth Section: alms-tax (*bāb-i chahārum: zakāt*); Fifth Section: *khums* (can you translate or explain?) (*bāb-i panjum: khums*); Sixth section: pilgrimage (*bāb-i shīshum: ḥajj*); Seventh Section: Commanding the good (*bāb-i haftum: amr bi ma‘rūf*); Eighth Section: *jihād* (which is often associated with the Qur’ānic term “struggle in the way of God” and can denote physical or non-physical struggle); (*bāb-i hashtum: jihād*); Ninth Section; buying and selling (*bāb-i nuhum: bi‘a*).

3 Third Chapter/Aim (*maqṣad-i siyyum*): Rules of the Way (*aḥkām-i ṭarīqat*)

First Section: the novice's promise to the guide (*bāb-i awwal: lisān dādan-i murīd bi murshīd*); Second Section: the courtesies of Guidance (*bāb-i duwwum: ādāb-i irshād*);

4 Fourth Chapter/Aim (*maqṣad-i chahārum*): Rules of the Certificates (*aḥkām-i majallā*)

First Section: The certificate of rules for the *ikhtiyārī* (*bāb-i awwal: majallā-yi aḥkām-i ikhtiyārī*); Second Section: The rules for the certificate of the *mufrad-abdālī* (*bāb-i duwwum: aḥkām-i majallā-yi mufrad-abdālī*); Third Section: The courtesies of the certificate for *ghazāvat* (*bāb-i siyyum: ādāb-i majallā-yi ghazāvat*); Fourth Section: The courtesies of *lisān nāmchih* (*bāb-i chahārum: ādāb-i lisān nāmchih*); Fifth Section: translation?; (*bāb-i panjum: iqrār-i nāmchah-yi khidmat*).

5 Fifth Chapter/Aim (*maqṣad-i panjum*): Rules concerning the questions for the seeker about the way and [their] answers (*aḥkām-i su‘āl namūdan-i ṭālib az rāh-i ṭarīqat wa javāb farmūdan*)

First Section: The courtesies of the ‘Ajam genealogy (*bāb-i awwal: ādāb-i kursī-yi ‘Ajam*).