THE BEGINNINGS OF THE NAQSHBANDIYYA IN DÂGHESTÂN AND THE RUSSIAN CONQUEST OF THE CAUCASUS

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The importance of the Naqshbandiyya in the modern history of Dâghestân is acknowledged in contemporary historiography. Acknowledged, that is, within the general neglect of the Naqshbandiyya in Western scholarship. It is known fairly well that this tâ'ifâ led the thirty-year-long (1829–1859) resistance to the Russian conquest, that it led further uprisings in 1863, 1877–1878 and 1920. With the recent flow of information from the USSR and later CIS, it is becoming clearer that the Naqshbandiyya still holds a strong position in the contemporary life of Dâghestân.¹ In comparison, the beginning of its activity in the country is shrouded by clouds of political interests—past and present—ignorance and prejudice which make most of the descriptions an incredible combination of factual errors, misunderstandings and fantasy. The aim of this article is to disperse some of these clouds.

The Naqshbandiyya is one of the major šûfî târîqas and tâ'îfâs. Originally called tariqat al-khâwâjâgân (lit. the path of the masters) and founded by Abû Ya'qûb al-Hamadânî (d. 1240), it is named after Shaykh Muḥammad Bahâ’ al-Dîn al-Naqshbandî (1318–1389),

who gave it its final structure. The Naqshbandiyya was from its inception "strictly orthodox" and played an "especially important role in ensuring the attachment of the Turkish peoples to the Sunni tradition".

From its area of origin in Central Asia, the Naqshbandiyya spread to other parts of the Muslim World. In India Shaykh Ahmad Fārūqi Sirhindi (1564–1624) transformed it into "the vanguard of renascent Islamic orthodoxy". From there "the militant reviva-

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4 Trimingham, p. 63.