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The two Holy Cities of the Hijaz had, since the Mamluk period from 648/1250 till 923/1517, experienced an increase in their position as centers of Islamic learning. That was due to the support of the Mamluk sultans who had established and funded a wide range of institutions for learning as well as for Sufi activities, including madāris, arbiṭa, zawāyā and khawāniq.

Government support for these institutions continued strongly during the Ottoman period. The Ottoman sultans invested in the existing institutions and added many new ones. Furthermore, they protected the safety of the pilgrimage caravans and granted financial subsidies to those who held religious positions, among the long-standing inhabitants of the Haramayn as well as among the newcomers. The historians of that time praised them for their deeds. An author like Muḥammad Kibrit al-Husaynī al-Madanī (d. 1070/1660) quoted Qutb al-Dīn al-Ý anafī, the mufti of the Ý aramayn, as follows:

“The people of the Haramayn did not prosper in any state as much as under the rule of the Ottoman House. May God extend their rule till the Day of Judgement!” (inna ahla al-Ý aramayn al-sharīfayn ma shabiḥū fi dawla min al-duwal mithlama shabiḥū fi dawlat ʾal- ʿUthmān khallada Allāh taʿāla ayyāmahum ilā qiyyām al-mīzān.)

1 The article is dedicated to the memory of the late Prof. Nehemia Levtzion. It is based on a chapter of a Ph.D. thesis about Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī al-Shahrazūrī (d. 1101/1690), written under his supervision, which would be submitted to the Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

The wide support which the Ottoman Sultans demonstrated towards the Haramayn, together with the improvement of sea transportation which also involved more and more European ships, increased the number of the ‘ulama’ who visited the Haramayn, and not infrequently chose to stay for some shorter or longer period as mujāwirūn. As a result of this process, the reputation of the Haramayn as a center for Islamic learning increased during the 11th/17th century. The Holy Cities were sought out in particular for two fields of religious studies: Hadith and Sufism. During this period, at least forty türuç were present in the two towns. Most common among them in the Haramayn at that time were the Naqshbandiyya and, to a lesser extent, the Shattāriyya.

The focus of this article is on the impact of the Naqshbandiyya and its offshoot, the Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī (d. 1034/1624), called by his adherents the “renewer of the Second (Islamic) Millennium” (Mujaddid al-alf al-thānī). It will look at some new source materials related to the spread of this brotherhood in the Haramayn, and will try to figure out the implications of this spread for the scholar community of the Hijaz.

The entrance of the Naqshbandiyya to the Haramayn

The Naqshbandiyya which had its roots in older Sufi lineages of Iran and Central Asia was consolidated in Transoxania during the Timurid era. Its rise to social and political prominence was due mainly to Khwāja Nāsir al-Dīn ʿUbaydallāh Ahrār (d. 895/1490). He was apparently the first among the Naqshbandiyya shaykhs who sent his students outside Transoxania to eastern China, southern Afghanistan, western Persia and Anatolia, and even to the Hijaz. His branch of the order, the Naqshbandiyya Ahrāriyya, also entered India during the time of Babur (d. 937/1530-1) and came to spread there

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