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# Aḥmad Yasavī and the Ismāʿīlīs of Badakhshān: Towards a New Social History of Sufi-Shīʿī Relations in Central Asia

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## Abstract

This article examines how a text attributed to the renowned Central Asian Sufi figure Aḥmad Yasavī came to be found within a manuscript produced within the Ismāʿīlī Shīʿī community of the Shughnān district of the Badakhshān region of Central Asia. The adoption of this text into an Ismāʿīlī codex suggests an exchange between two disparate Islamic religious traditions in Central Asia between which there has hitherto been little evidence of contact. Previous scholarship on Ismāʿīlī-Sufi relations has focused predominately on the literary and intellectual engagement between these traditions, while the history of persecution experienced by the Ismāʿīlīs at the hands of Sunnī Muslims has largely overshadowed discussions of the social relationship between the Ismāʿīlīs and other Muslim communities in Central Asia. I demonstrate that this textual exchange provides evidence for a previously unstudied social engagement between Ismāʿīlī and Sunnī communities in Central Asia that was facilitated by the rise of the Khanate of Khoqand in the 18th century. The mountainous territory of Shughnān, where the manuscript under consideration originated, has been typically represented in scholarship as isolated prior to the onset of colonial interest in the region in the late 19th century. Building upon recent research on the impact of early modern globalization on Central Asia, I demonstrate that even this remote region was significantly affected by the intensification of globalizing processes in the century preceding the Russian conquest. Accordingly, I take this textual exchange as a starting point for a broader re-evaluation of the Ismāʿīlī-Sufi relationship in Central Asia and of the social ‘connectivity’ of the Ismāʿīlīs and the Badakhshān region within early modern Eurasia.

## Keywords

Central Asia – Yasaviyya – Ismāʿīlīs – Badakhshān – Khoqand – Sufism – Turkistān

### 1 Introduction

This article examines how a text attributed to the renowned Central Asian Sufi figure Aḥmad Yasavī came to be found within a manuscript produced within the Ismāʿīlī Shīʿī community of the Badakhshān region of Central Asia. The adoption of this text into an Ismāʿīlī codex suggests an exchange between two disparate Islamic religious traditions in Central Asia among which there has hitherto been little evidence of contact, and raises some critical questions regarding the social connectivity of the Ismāʿīlīs of Central Asia. Aḥmad Yasavī is a looming figure in the historical consciousness of Central Asia and the Turkic peoples. While his legacy is particularly celebrated today in the country of Kazakhstan, where his shrine sits in the southern city of Turkistan, he is commemorated to one degree or another in all of the Turkic countries of the world as a reputed founding figure of the Turkic literary tradition and for his legendary role in the Islamization of the Turks. Historically, his name and legacy have been broadly associated with the Ḥanafī Sunnī Muslim tradition of Central Asia and more specifically with the Yasavī Sufi tradition of which he is the eponym. Meanwhile, the conventional image of the Ismāʿīlīs is one that would suggest an almost diametric difference with that of the legacy of Aḥmad Yasavī. Rather than the open expanses of the steppe, the Central Asian Ismāʿīlīs are associated above all with the remote and inaccessible mountainous territories of Badakhshān, a region in present-day eastern Tajikistan and northeastern Afghanistan. In contrast with the purportedly Turkic legacy of Aḥmad Yasavī, Ismāʿīlism is widely considered to be a distinctly Iranian tradition,<sup>1</sup> with the Ismāʿīlīs of Central Asia belonging primarily to the Eastern Iranian ethnicities of the Pamirs, often depicted as the last remaining ‘pure’ descendants of the

1 The emphasis on the distinctly ‘Iranian’ essence of Ismāʿīlism may be seen in the works of scholars in the tradition of Henry Corbin, who characterized Ismāʿīlism as constituting a manifestation of a primordial Iranian mystical tradition; see for instance his “Nāṣir-i Khusrau and Iranian Ismāʿīlism.” In *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 4: *The Period from the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs*, ed. R.N. Frye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975): 520-42. More recently, Farhad Daftary has characterized the early Nizārī Ismāʿīlī movement in Iran under the leadership of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ as “an expression of Persian ‘national’ sentiment” against the rule of the Saljūq Turks, who “threatened the revival of Persian culture and sentiment.” See his *The Ismāʿīlīs: Their History and Doctrines*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 316.

Iranian or Aryan populations who inhabited Central Asia prior to the Turkic and Mongol irruptions.<sup>2</sup> Finally, the Ismāʿīlīs, as a Shīʿī Muslim community, constitute a religious minority that was often persecuted at the hands of the Ḥanafī Sunnī Muslims who predominate in Central Asia.

Nearly all of these stereotypes have been challenged to one degree or another in recent scholarship. As the work of Devin DeWeese and others has demonstrated, the Yasavī tradition in the early modern period was rooted much more strongly in the sedentary, urban areas of Central Asia than in the steppe; moreover, the bulk of the literature produced within the Yasavī tradition was in Persian, and not in Turkic.<sup>3</sup> And while it is true that Ismāʿīlism in Central Asia today has an integral (although not exclusive) association with the Eastern Iranian populations of the Pamirs,<sup>4</sup> these communities were not altogether isolated from the broader social environment of Central Asia; particularly in the 18th and 19th century, there is a considerable history of mobility and exchange that has remained unexamined in scholarship on this community. And while it is also true that the Ismāʿīlīs were widely persecuted in Central Asia and elsewhere in the past, they nonetheless displayed a profound engagement with the works and traditions of their Sunnī neighbors. These developments in the field of both Yasavī and Ismāʿīlī studies help us to better understand the context that may have facilitated the engagement between these traditions. I argue that this textual exchange provides evidence for a previously unrecognized social engagement between Ismāʿīlīs and communities associated with the Yasavī tradition in early modern Central Asia. As such, it presents a unique opportunity to broach the much neglected topic of social history within Ismāʿīlī studies, a field which to date has been chiefly preoccupied with concerns of philology or intellectual history.

2 M. Laruelle, *Mythe aryen et rêve imperial dans la Russie du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2005): 133-67.

3 See D. DeWeese, "The Yasavī Presence in the Dasht-i Qipchaq from the 16th to the 18th Century." In *Islam, Society and States across the Qazaq Steppe (18th-early 20th centuries)*, ed. N. Pianciola and P. Sartori (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2013): 27-67; Idem., "The Disciples of Aḥmad Yasavī among the Turks of Central Asia: Early Views, Conflicting Evidence, and the Emergence of the Yasavī *Silsila*." In *Role of Religions in the Turkic Culture*, ed. É. Csáki, M. Ivanics, and Z. Olach (Budapest: Péter Pázmány Catholic University, 2017): 11-25.

4 While the vast majority of the Ismāʿīlīs of Central Asia belong to the eastern Iranian Pamiri ethnicities, there are a small number of Turkic-speaking Ismāʿīlīs among the Kirghiz population of the Wakhan region, on whom see Z. Ay, "The Wakhis of Gojal (Upper Hunza): An Historical Analysis within the Context of Ismailism in Badakhshan." *Alevilik-Bektaşılık Araştırmaları Dergisi* 19 (2019): 81-112. For the purposes of this paper I have not included the Hazara Ismāʿīlīs of Central Afghanistan within the framework of the Central Asian tradition.

The text analyzed in this article appears in a manuscript from the Shughnān district of present-day Tajik Badakhshān that can be tentatively dated to the second half of the 19th century.<sup>5</sup> While the text is untitled in the manuscript, it can be identified as a copy of a Persian text attributed (almost certainly anachronistically) to Aḥmad Yasavī that is found in a number of codices elsewhere in Central Asia, titled *Risāla dar ādāb-i ʿarīqat* (“Treatise on Etiquette of the Path,” hereafter referred to as *Risāla*). It is preceded by a brief biographical account of Yasavī outlining his spiritual training and *silsila*. At one level, this article addresses the basic question of the source for this biography of Aḥmad Yasavī and the text attributed to him within the Ismāʿīlī manuscript. However, its aims extend beyond philological considerations, as I address the question not only of how, but why the Ismāʿīlīs adopted this text.

The Central Asian Ismāʿīlī tradition thus far has chiefly studied in the context of its place within the broader history of Ismāʿīlism or Shīʿism, rather than in the context of the history of Islam in Central Asia.<sup>6</sup> Scholarship on the place of the Ismāʿīlīs within the context of Central Asian history has focused primarily on the political rather than the religious dimensions of their relations with neighboring powers and communities, emphasizing the largely hostile reception they have received from non-Ismāʿīlīs in the region.<sup>7</sup> Yet while this history of persecution experienced by the Ismāʿīlīs is indisputable, there is also an increasing body of evidence to suggest that this prevailing emphasis on the experience of repression obscures a significant history of mobility and exchange that did occur, and through which the Ismāʿīlīs undertook a highly creative engagement with the stories and traditions of their Sunnī neighbors.

This article is not the first work of scholarship to recognize the presence of narratives concerning Aḥmad Yasavī and other Sufi figures among the Ismāʿīlīs of Badakhshān.<sup>8</sup> Scholarship since the early 20th century has recognized that

5 I discuss the manuscript and the text in further detail later in the article.

6 For a general survey of the history and historiography of Ismāʿīlism in Central Asia see D. Beben, “The Ismaili in Central Asia.” In *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*, ed. D. Ludden (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018): available online at <http://asian.history.oxfordre.com>.

7 For example see H. Elnazarov and S. Aksakolov, “The Nizari Ismailis of Central Asia in Modern Times.” In *A Modern History of the Ismailis: Continuity and Change in a Muslim Community*, ed. F. Daftary (London: I.B. Tauris and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2011): 45-76.

8 There has been relatively little previous scholarship that has specifically examined the question of engagement between the Ismāʿīlī and Yasavī traditions. The single exception is the work of the Turkish scholar Zahide Ay; see her “Orta Asya’da Şiilik: Horasan, Maverünnehir ve Bedaḥşan’a İsmāʿīlîliğin Girişi ve Gelişimi.” *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi* 62 (2012): 271-86. However, other scholars have noted the presence of Aḥmad Yasavī in Ismāʿīlī literature in the context of broader treatments of Ismāʿīlī history and Ismāʿīlī-Sufi relations. I discuss this literature further in the article.

Ismāʿīlīs as a whole, and those of Badakhshān in particular, display a notable proclivity for incorporating the works and ideas of non-Ismāʿīlī authors, particularly Persian Sufi poets, within their own tradition, and occasionally have even considered such figures to have been Ismāʿīlīs themselves.<sup>9</sup> Yet, the scholarship examining the relationship between Ismāʿīlīs and the Sufi traditions, whether in Central Asia or elsewhere, has often approached the topic through an ahistorical lens.<sup>10</sup> One of the earliest and most influential scholars to have written on this topic, the Russian emigre scholar Wladimir Ivanow, wrote concerning one such text, the *Chirāgh-nāma*, in which the name of Aḥmad Yasavī appears, that the text emerged from “the process which goes on in the masses, and which is directed to the synthetisation of the popular form of Sufism ... with equally popular versions of Ismailism,” and that the text offers “a typical example of that Sufic-Ismaili mentality which could only develop in the circumstances in which some considerable Ismaili minority lives side by side with Sunni majority.”<sup>11</sup> Yet Ivanow’s treatment provides little in the way of historical specificity in tracing this engagement. More recently, a number of scholars have argued that the adoption by the Ismāʿīlīs of Sufi motifs and modalities in the post-Mongol era reflected an effort to dissimulate and conceal their ideas in the face of religious persecution.<sup>12</sup> Other scholars have explored the rich exchange between Sufi and Ismāʿīlī ideas in the arenas of poetry and intellectual history.<sup>13</sup> Yet thus far, scholarship on the Sufi-Ismāʿīlī encounter has

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- 9 See in particular the work of G. van den Berg, *Minstrel Poetry from the Pamir Mountains: A Study on the Songs and Poems of the Ismāʿīlīs of Tajik Badakhshan* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2004). See further my discussion in “Reimagining *Taqīyya*: The ‘Narrative of the Four Pillars’ and Strategies of Secrecy among the Ismāʿīlīs of Central Asia.” *History of Religions* 59, no. 2 (2019): 83-107.
- 10 I employ the term ‘Sufi traditions’ here to refer not only to Sufi orders in the strict sense, but more broadly to authors and communities who identify themselves as Sufi or who are affiliated with the legacy of a Sufi shaykh in some respect. I present a more detailed discussion of the various forms of Sufi affiliation in the context of the Yasavī tradition further below.
- 11 W. Ivanow, “Sufism and Ismailism: *Chiragh-Nama*.” *Revue Iranienne d’Anthropologie* 3 (1959): 15 and 17 (respectively).
- 12 F. Daftary, “Ismaili-Sufi Relations in post-Alamut Persia.” In *his Ismailis in Medieval Muslim Societies* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005): 183-203; N.E. Jamal, *Surviving the Mongols: Nizārī Quhistānī and the Continuity of Ismaili Tradition in Persia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002); S.N. Virani, *The Ismailis in the Middle Ages: A History of Survival, a Search for Salvation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
- 13 For examples of this scholarship see A. Iliiev, *The Ismāʿīlī-Sufi Sage of Pamir: Mubārak-i Wakhānī and the Esoteric Tradition of the Pamiri Muslims* (Amherst: Cambria Press, 2008); H. Landolt, “Aṭṭār, Sufism and Ismailism.” In *Aṭṭār and the Persian Sufi Tradition: The Art of Spiritual Flight*, ed. L. Lewisohn and C. Shackle (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006): 3-26; L. Lewisohn, “Sufism and Ismāʿīlī Doctrine in the Persian Poetry of Nizārī Quhistānī (645-721/1247-1321).” *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* 41 (2003):

focused almost exclusively on the literary realm, while the evidence for social contacts between Ismāʿīlī and Sufi communities in Central Asia or elsewhere remains largely unexamined.<sup>14</sup>

To be sure, there are good reasons for why the study of the social history and ‘connectivity’ of the Ismāʿīlīs of Central Asia has been hitherto neglected in scholarship. First, while Ismāʿīlīs in Central Asia have maintained a large supply of religious literature, due to their marginal economic and social position they produced and preserved rather little in the way of archival documents from the pre-Soviet era, such as financial registers, property deeds or legal records, which are normally consulted in the study of social history.<sup>15</sup> What documentation does exist has, until quite recently, remained inaccessible in private collections, their contents largely obscure even to their owners on account of the imposed script change in the early Soviet era. That being said, a number of important materials and collections have come to light in recent years, and more will undoubtedly become available as collection efforts in the region continue.<sup>16</sup> Second, as an oft-persecuted Shīʿī community Ismāʿīlīs were frequently compelled to practice precautionary dissimulation (*taqiyya*) when interacting with non-Ismāʿīlīs. Accordingly, Ismāʿīlīs oftentimes simply do not appear in the sources, even when we may expect them to be present. One must, of course, take caution that this proclivity towards dissimulation among Ismāʿīlīs not be taken as license to posit their existence simply wherever one might wish to find them, regardless of its likelihood. However, a more sober approach to this problem need not require completely abandoning the

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229-51. Shafique Virani has demonstrated that the Ismāʿīlī-Sufi literary engagement can be traced as far back as the 12th century; see his “Persian Poetry, Sufism and Ismailism: The Testimony of Khwājah Qāsim Tushtarī’s *Recognizing God*.” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* ser. 3, 29, no. 1 (2019): 17-49.

- 14 The only instance of social contacts between Ismāʿīlī and Sufi communities that has been considered thus far in scholarship is the relationship between the Ismāʿīlī imāmate and the Twelver Shīʿī Niʿmatullāhī Sufi order in Iran, on which see D. Beben, “Introduction” to Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Ḥusaynī, *The First Aga Khan: Memoirs of the 46th Ismaili Imam*, ed. and trans. D. Beben and D. Mohammad Poor (London: I.B. Tauris and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2018): 34-38; N. Pourjavady and P.L. Wilson, “Ismāʿīlīs and Niʿmatullāhīs.” *Studia Islamica* 41 (1975): 113-35.
- 15 On the use of documents for the study of social history in Central Asia see P. Sartori, “Introduction: On the Social in Central Asian History: Notes in the Margins of Legal Records.” In *Explorations in the Social History of Modern Central Asia (19th-early 20th century)*, ed. P. Sartori (Leiden: Brill, 2013): 1-22.
- 16 See in particular the recent publication by U. Mamadsheerzodshoev and Y. Kawahara, eds., *Documents from Private Archives in Right-Bank Badakhshan*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Department of Islamic Area Studies, University of Tokyo, 2015).

prospect of locating hidden networks of Ismāʿīlīs, but rather calls for a more careful handling of the circumstantial evidence that might support such a proposition.

Finally, it should be noted that despite the general scarcity of ‘concrete’ historical data to be found in the literature of the Ismāʿīlīs, this body of literature nonetheless holds great potential for providing evidence of contacts with other communities, provided that one knows what to look for. However, developments in this regard have also been hampered by the more generally poor state of research on the religious life of early modern Central Asia, which remains the preserve of only a small number of specialists, and the bulk of the religious literature produced in Central Asia in this period remains unexplored. Accordingly, the field is not only lacking in research into Ismāʿīlī texts themselves, but it is also lacking in research into the broader corpus of Muslim religious literature in Central Asia that may have informed that tradition. Nonetheless, as a result of recent developments in the study of early modern Islamic Central Asia, we now at least have a better sense of the general outlines of the broader religious and social landscape in which the Ismāʿīlīs subsisted, and with which they and their textual traditions engaged.<sup>17</sup>

The bulk of the scholarship on the literary exchange between Sufism and Ismāʿīlism, as well as Shīʿism more broadly, has focused on the manner in which Ismāʿīlīs adopted or ‘borrowed’ ideas from Sufi authors that could provide meaning within a Shīʿi environment, such as texts testifying to the primacy of ‘Alī or providing esoteric interpretations of *Qurʾān*.<sup>18</sup> Yet while the utility and adaptability of Sufi writings and ideas to Ismāʿīlī needs was also a key factor in the adoption of the text under discussion in this paper, recognizing the significance of this text for the Ismāʿīlī tradition requires that we take a more expansive approach towards understanding the parameters of this interface. What makes the appearance of the *Risāla* attributed to Aḥmad Yasavī in an Ismāʿīlī codex interesting is precisely that it is not focused on the more esoteric themes that have typically been explored in studies of the Sufi-Ismāʿīlī engagement; rather, the text is concerned with eminently practical matters of conduct (*ādāb*) within the environment of a functioning Sufi community. In other words, what this text demonstrates is that it was not just the intellectual

17 For an overview of recent developments in this regard see D. DeWeese and J.-A. Gross, eds., *Sufism in Central Asia: New Perspectives on Sufi Traditions, 15th-21st Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

18 In addition to the studies listed above, see also G. van den Berg, “Literary Afterlives: Mediaeval Persian Poets and Strategies of Legitimation in the Oral Poetry of the Ismāʿīlīs of Tajik Badakhshan.” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 45 (2018): 355-80.

Sufism of poetry or *tafsīr*, but also the lived Sufism of the *khānaqāh* that Ismāʿīlī authors and copyists found to be relevant for their tradition. Moreover, the source of the text attributed to Yasavī suggests that it came to the attention of the Ismāʿīlīs through social contact with Central Asia communities claiming a genealogical filiation with Yasavī, and not merely through a passive engagement in the literary realm. Altogether, this reproduction of a text attributed to Aḥmad Yasavī in an Ismāʿīlī manuscript points to a wider engagement with the Sufi traditions of Central Asia on the part of the Ismāʿīlīs than has previously been recognized in scholarship.

I begin with a general assessment of some of the scholarly paradigms related to the study of the Ismāʿīlī and Yasavī traditions. From there I will turn to an assessment of the very limited evidence for the presence of the Yasavī Sufi order within Badakhshān, before turning to a discussion of the context which I argue was more likely to have served as the facilitator of this textual exchange, namely, an emerging Ismāʿīlī presence within the Turkistān region of Central Asia in the 18th and 19th century. Finally, I will turn to an examination of the traditions associated with Yasavī among the Ismāʿīlīs and their origins, and will explore the evidence these provide for the broader social ‘connectivity’ of Ismāʿīlī in early modern Central Asia.

## 2 Aḥmad Yasavī and Badakhshān: The Ḥājjī Bektāsh Narrative

Both the Yasavī and Ismāʿīlī traditions do in fact share one important connection with each other, in that both traditions have received similar treatments in scholarship and have been subject to the same series of distorting scholarly paradigms, whether rooted in the Soviet tradition of scholarship or additionally in a Turkish nationalist paradigm in the case of the Yasaviyya.<sup>19</sup> Both traditions have been depicted as reflecting a superficially Islamized set of pre-Islamic practices and beliefs, supposedly rooted in nomadic Turko-Mongol ‘shamanism’ in the case of the Yasaviyya and an imagined proto-Aryan or Zoroastrian past for the Ismāʿīlīs of Badakhshān.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, scholarship on

19 On the study of the Yasavī Sufi tradition see the comments by Devin DeWeese in his “Foreword,” to Mehmet Fuat Köprülü, *Early Mystics in Turkish Literature*, trans. G. Leiser and R. Dankoff (London: Routledge, 2006): viii-xxvii.

20 See my discussion on this topic in “The Legendary Biographies of Nāṣir-i Khusraw: Memory and Textualization in Early Modern Persian Ismāʿīlism” (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 2015): 46-52. See also R. Foltz, “When Was Central Asia Zoroastrian?” *The Mankind Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (1998): 189-200.



the Yasavī tradition often reflects certain long-standing (and long debunked) assumptions regarding the supposedly ‘proto-Shīʿī’ trends that are said to have characterized the early adoption and practice of Islam among the nomadic Turks,<sup>21</sup> anachronistically imposing later developments seen among the Turks of Anatolia upon the Turks of the Eurasian steppe. In the case of Aḥmad Yasavī in particular, the tradition of his natural descent from the figure of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya, a son of the first Shīʿī Imām ‘Alī, has been mistakenly interpreted as evidence of Shīʿī leanings within the early Yasavī tradition, reflecting a misunderstanding of the legacy of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya within Central Asia.<sup>22</sup>

This paradigm of the Yasavī tradition and Turkic Islam as inhabiting a form of ‘proto-Shīʿism’ may be seen in the interpretations that have been offered of one very curious narrative that seemingly connects Aḥmad Yasavī directly with the Badakhshān region, and which has been cited to support claims of some manner of a historical connection between the Yasavī tradition and the Ismāʿīlīs of Badakhshān. The narrative in question is found in the *Vilāyet-nāme*, a late 15th-century Turkic hagiographical account of the 13th-century Anatolian saint Ḥājī Bektāsh.<sup>23</sup> The narrative, briefly, tells of how at the time the region of Badakhshān was peopled by infidels (*kāfirler*) who launched raids against the Muslim community.<sup>24</sup> Growing tired of these con-

21 This notion was already debunked many years ago in a groundbreaking article by Wilferd Madelung, but nonetheless the idea persists in many treatments of Islam among the Turks; see his “The Spread of Mātūrīdism and the Turks.” In *Actas, IV Congresso des Estudos Árabes et Islâmicos, Coimbra-Lisboa, 1 a 8 de setembro de 1968* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971): 109-68.

22 For instance, see I. Melikoff, “Ahmed Yesevi and Turkic Popular Islam.” In *Utrecht Papers on Central Asia*, ed. M. van Damme and H. Boeschoten (Utrecht: Institute of Oriental Languages, University of Utrecht, 1987): 83-94. By contrast, Devin DeWeese notes that “the legacy of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya was cultivated in a wide range of environments, from ‘mainstream’ Muslim contexts to revolutionary movements.... Evoking his legacy, whether in the 14th century or in the 20th, may thus signal a quite generic piety, and regard for his connection with Islamization, without any specific sectarian implications.” D. DeWeese and A. Muminov, eds., *Islamization and Sacred Lineages in Central Asia: The Legacy of Ishaq Bab in Narrative and Genealogical Traditions*, vol. 1: *Opening the Way for Islam: The Ishaq Bab Narrative, 14th-19th Centuries* (Almaty: Daik, 2013): 274-83 [281].

23 On this narrative see A.T. Karamustafa, *God’s Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200-1550* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994): 52-53; Mehmet Fuat Köprülü, *Early Mystics in Turkish Literature*, trans. G. Leiser and R. Dankoff (London: Routledge, 2006): 34.

24 *Vilāyet-nāme: Menakib-i Hacı Bektāş Velī*, ed. Abdülbâki Gölpınarlı (Istanbul: İnkılâp kitabevi, 1958): 9-12.

stant attacks, the Muslims turned for assistance to Aḥmad Yasavī, who sent his son Ḥaydar along with an army of 5,000 warriors to subdue the unbelievers.<sup>25</sup> This army, however, was defeated, and Yasavī's son Ḥaydar was imprisoned in Badakhshān for seven years. In desperation Aḥmad Yasavī prayed to God for help, at which moment Ḥājji Bektāsh appeared, promptly rescuing Yasavī's son from captivity, and later led further campaigns into Badakhshān and converted its people to Islam.

There is not space here to discuss the many interesting elements of this account in further detail or to examine the question of its significance for the Bektāshī tradition in which it developed and circulated; in brief, the influential Turkish scholar Fuad Köprülü took this narrative, along with the presence of other traditions associating Aḥmad Yasavī with Ḥājji Bektāsh, as reflecting an organic relationship between Aḥmad Yasavī and the Sufi traditions of Anatolia, under the assumption that followers of Yasavī's *ṭariqa* were instrumental in the Islamization of Anatolia in the pre-Ottoman era.<sup>26</sup> Given the Shī'ī affiliations that later developed within the Bektāshī tradition in Anatolia, it is not surprising that efforts have been made to ascribe such 'proto-Shī'ī' affiliations to Yasavī himself or to perceive in this narrative a reflection of some manner of historical connection between the Bektāshīs and the Shī'ī Ismā'īlī tradition of Badakhshān.<sup>27</sup> There is indeed evidence of cross-fertilization between Ismā'īlī thought and various messianic movements with Shī'ī tendencies that flourished in the post-Mongol Near East, such as the Nuḡṭavī or Ḥurūfī movements, which later became assimilated within the Bektāshī tradition.<sup>28</sup>

25 Karamustafa glosses the word *kāfir* in the text here as 'Ismā'īlī'; however, the normal pejorative term employed for Ismā'īlīs in such sources is *malāḥida* or *rāfiḍī*. The narrative instead evidently refers to the non-Muslim, so-called *kāfir* communities of the Hindu Kush region bordering on Badakhshān.

26 Köprülü, *Early Mystics in Turkish Literature*: 37. For a critique of this paradigm see A. Karakaya-Stump, "The *Vefā'yye*, the Bektashiyye and Genealogies of 'Heterodox' Islam in Anatolia: Rethinking the Köprülü Paradigm." *Turcica* 44 (2012-13): 279-300; A.T. Karamustafa, "Origins of Anatolian Sufism." In *Sufism and Sufis in Ottoman Society: Sources, Doctrine, Rituals, Turuq, Architecture, Literature and Fine Arts, Modernism*, ed. A.Y. Ocak (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2005): 67-95.

27 For example, see Z. Ay, "13. Yüzyılda Anadolu'nun İslamlaşma Sürecindeki İsmaili Etkiler ve Bu Etkilerdeki Vefā'ilik Boyutu." *Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi* 11, no. 2 (2016): 1-22; Idem., "15.-16. Yüzyıllarda Bedaḥşan İsmailileri Arasındaki Şii-Tasavvufi Hareketler ve Safevī Etkisi." *Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Velī Araştırma Dergisi* 79 (2016): 217-26.

28 For the relations between these traditions and Ismā'īlism see Daftary, "Ismaili-Sufi Relations in post-Alamut Persia": 183-203. On the Nuḡṭavī movement and its relationship with Ismā'īlism see A. Amanat, "The Nuḡṭavī Movement of Maḥmūd Pisikhānī and His Persian Cycle of Mystical-Materialism." In *Mediaeval Ismā'īlī History and Thought*, ed. F. Daftary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 281-98. On the relationship

However, the engagement between these traditions appears to have occurred more within the literary field than within the context of actual communal contacts between these communities, for which there is no direct evidence.

Moreover, scholarship on this narrative has so far neglected to take into consideration the probable source of inspiration for this tale, namely the account of Amīr Tīmūr's late 14th-century campaign against the so-called Siyāh-Pūsh Kāfirs of the Hindu Kush region, as memorialized in Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī's *Ẓafar-nāma*. Yazdī's account bears some clear structural similarities with the narrative in the *Vilāyet-nāme*, setting the stage for Tīmūr's campaign with an account of the oppression imposed upon the Muslim community by the Kāfirs through their caravan raids.<sup>29</sup> The narrative in the *Vilāyet-nāme*, therefore, would seem to reflect Ḥājji Bektāsh's reputation as a *ghāzī* or 'frontier-warrior' saint, with Bektāsh substituting for Tīmūr's role as the savior of the Muslim community of Khurāsān. Hence, rather than presenting evidence of an organic connection between the Yasavī or Bektāshī tradition with the Badakhshān region, this story, when interpreted as a hagiographical narrative, reflects the reputation that Badakhshān and the Hindu Kush region held as a frontier in the imagination of the medieval Islamic world, thereby serving as a convenient backdrop to display the military and Islamizing prowess of Ḥājji Bektāsh. It suffices to state that this narrative finds no echo in the traditions of any of the communities of Badakhshān itself nor among any of the Muslim communities of the former Kāfiristān, and bears only a coincidental connection with the engagement under consideration in this paper.<sup>30</sup>

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between the Ḥurūfī movement and the Bektāshiyya see H. Algar, "The Ḥurūfī Influence on Bektashism." In *Bektachīyya: études sur l'ordre mystique des Bektachis et les groupes relevant de Hadji Bektach*, ed. A. Popovic and G. Veinstein (Istanbul: Éditions Isis, 1995): 39-53.

29 Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī, *Ẓafar-nāma*, ed. Sayyid Sa'īd Mīr Muḥammad Ṣādiq and 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Navā'ī, 2 vols. (Tehran: Kitābkhāna, Mūzīh va Markaz-i Isnād-i Majlis-i Shūrā-yi Islāmī, 1387 Sh./2008): vol. 1, 868-73. The popularity of this account is demonstrated by its inclusion (in a highly exaggerated rendition) in the 17th-century Indian legendary autobiography of Tīmūr, the *Malfūzāt-i Tīmūrī*; see H.M. Elliot and J. Dowson, eds., *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians: The Muhammadan Period*, 8 vols. (London: Trübner & Co., 1867-77): vol. 3, 401-8.

30 On oral traditions concerning the Islamization of the Kāfirs see G. Buddruss, "Spiegelungen der Islamisierung Kafiristans in der mündlichen Überlieferung." In *Ethnologie und Geschichte: Festschrift für Karl Jettmar*, ed. P. Snoy (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1983): 73-88; and the revised English translation published as "Reflections of the Islamisation of Kafiristan in Oral Tradition." *Journal of Asian Civilizations* 31, no. 1/2 (2008): 16-35.

### 3 The Yasavī Tradition and Badakhshān

The Badakhshān region became host to a number of Sufi traditions in the wake of the Mongol conquests. The earliest direct evidence for Sufi activity in the region is associated with the renowned Kubravī shaykh Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadānī (d. 786/1385), who visited the region and became the spiritual tutor to the ruler of Badakhshān, Bahrām Shāh.<sup>31</sup> The Kubraviyya remained the dominant Sufi tradition within Badakhshān down to the end of the 16th century, having established a strong rapport with the ruling houses of the region. In 1584 the Badakhshān region was conquered from the Timurids by the Uzbek ruler ‘Abdullāh Khān, who was a staunch partisan of the Naqshbandiyya and who lavished extensive patronage on Naqshbandī shaykhs who established themselves in the region.<sup>32</sup> Thereafter the fortunes of the Kubraviyya began to rapidly decline, both in Badakhshān and throughout Central Asia, in favor of the Naqshbandiyya.<sup>33</sup> While some lingering influence of Kubravī shaykhs can be traced in the region into the 17th century, thereafter Badakhshān, like the rest of Central Asia, became the almost exclusive preserve of the Naqshbandiyya, which had largely displaced not only the Kubraviyya, but the Yasaviyya as well throughout Central Asia by the 18th century.<sup>34</sup>

While the Yasaviyya is typically associated with the nomadic Turkic peoples of the steppe, the Yasavī tradition in the early modern period enjoyed a strong following as well among the sedentary Persianate communities of Central Asia, and active Yasavī lineages can be traced in many of the major urban areas of Central Asia down to the 18th century. In particular, Yasavī lineages were

31 Nūr al-Dīn Ja’far Badakhshī, *Khulāṣat al-manāqib*, ed. Sayyida Ashraf Zafar (Islamabad: Markaz-i Taḥqīqāt-i Fārsī-yi Irān va Pākistān, 1374 Sh./1995): 212, 289-90. On the Kubravī tradition in Badakhshān see further Beben, “The Legendary Biographies of Naṣīr-i Khusraw”: 197-213.

32 B.A. Akhmedov, “Rol’ Dzhuibarskikh khodzheĭ v obshchestvenno-politicheskoi zhizni Srednei Azii XVI-XVII vekov.” In *Dukhovenstvo i politicheskaiia zhizn’ na Blizhnem i Srednem Vostoke v period feodalizma* (Moscow: Nauka, 1985): 19.

33 On this broader development see D. DeWeese, “The Eclipse of the Kubraviyah in Central Asia.” *Iranian Studies* 21, no. 1/2 (1988): 45-83; republished with corrections in his *Studies on Sufism in Central Asia* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012): 1-39.

34 On the Naqshbandiyya in Badakhshān in the 18th and 19th century see A. Papas, “Soufis du Badakhshān: Un renouveau confrérique entre l’Inde et l’Asie centrale.” *Cahiers d’Asie Centrale* 11/12 (2004): 87-102. On the disappearance of the Yasavī order as a distinct corporate entity in this period see D. DeWeese, “‘Dis-Ordering’ Sufism in Early Modern Central Asia: Suggestions for Rethinking the Sources and Social Structures of Sufi History in the 18th and 19th Centuries.” In *History and Culture of Central Asia*, ed. B. Babadjanov and Y. Kawahara (Tokyo: Department of Islamic Area Studies, University of Tokyo, 2012): 259-79; Idem., “The Yasavī Presence in the Dasht-i Qipchaq”: 62.

known to have been active in the city of Balkh, whose rulers exercised sovereignty over Badakhshān in the 17th century, and where the post of *naqīb* at the court was generally occupied by descendants of the Yasavī shaykh Sayyid Ata.<sup>35</sup> However, we do not find any direct evidence testifying to an active presence for the order within Badakhshān itself. Given the attested presence of the Yasavī order in Balkh in the 16th and 17th century, it is not inconceivable that some minor branches of the order were active in neighboring Badakhshān during this time as well; however, it would appear that none of them were of sufficient prominence to obtain notice in the sources.

We do find several references to natives of Badakhshān within the Yasavī order in the 16th and 17th century; however, the scant information available on these figures suggests that their careers were based largely outside of Badakhshān itself. An example is found in a 17th-century Yasavī hagiography titled *Manāqīb al-akhyār*, which is an account of the author's father, a Yasavī shaykh named Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn, known popularly as Khoja Dīvāna Sayyid Atā'ī, who travelled widely throughout Central Asia and eventually settled in the Gujarat region of India. The text mentions two individuals whose *nisbas* suggest roots in Badakhshān, named Ḥusayn 'Alī Badakhshī and Ākhūnd Naẓar Badakhshī, who visited with him in India.<sup>36</sup> The latter figure is also referenced in a work by the 16th-century author Ḥazīnī (discussed further below), who mentions him as being a fellow disciple of his teacher in Balkh, although there is no mention of him being active within the Badakhshān region itself.<sup>37</sup> Meanwhile, an early 17th-century Yasavī hagiographical work, the *Lamaḥāt min nafahāt al-quds* of Muḥammad 'Ālim Ṣiddīqī 'Alavī (completed 1035/1626), records that the author visited Badakhshān in his youth and spent some time there in the company of a Kubravī shaykh;<sup>38</sup> however, this encounter occurred before the author's entry into the Yasaviyya, and hence again does not show any evidence for a Yasavī presence within Badakhshān.

35 Idem., "The Descendants of Sayyid Ata and the Rank of Naqib in Central Asia." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 115, no. 4 (1995): 612-34.

36 Muḥammad Qāsim Riḍvān, *Manāqīb al-akhyār*, MS London, India Office, no. 644: ff. 42a, 88a, 101a-b.

37 Sulṭān Aḥmad al-Ḥiṣārī Ḥazīnī, *Menba'u'l-ebhār fī riyāzī'l-ibrār*, ed. Mehmet Mâhur Tulum (Istanbul: Mehmet Ölmez, 2009): 304-7 (ff. 50a-b).

38 Muḥammad 'Ālim Ṣiddīqī 'Alavī, *Lamaḥāt min nafahāt al-quds*, ed. Muḥammad Nadhir Rānjhā (Lahore: Markaz-i Taḥqīqāt-i Fārsī-yi Irān va Pākistān, 1365 Sh./1986): 381. On this text see also D. DeWeese, "The Yasavī Order and Persian Historiography in Seventeenth-Century Central Asia: 'Ālim Shaykh of 'Aliyābād and his *Lamaḥāt min nafahāt al-quds*." In *The Heritage of Sufism*, vol. 3: *Late Classical Persianate Sufism (1501-1750)*, ed. L. Lewisohn and D. Morgan (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000): 389-414.

The most direct, if brief allusion to Yasavī activity within Badakhshān comes from the work of the 16th-century Yasavī shaykh Sulṭān Aḥmad al-Ḥiṣārī Ḥazīnī, who, as his *nisba* suggests, was a native of the Ḥiṣār region (also known as Ḥiṣār-i Shādmān) in present-day western Tajikistan, and who later moved to the Ottoman Empire, where he launched an abortive effort to establish a branch of the Yasaviyya in Istanbul. In his *Jāmi‘ al-murshidīn*, Ḥazīnī provides an account of his teacher, a Yasavī shaykh named Sayyid Manṣūr, who was a native of the Balkh region. He writes of his teacher that, after spending a number of years in training in the *khānaqāh* of his own teacher, Shaykh Sulaymān al-Ghaznavī, in Bukhara, Sayyid Manṣūr was then dispatched “to call the people to the [Yasavī] path in the direction of Balkh, Badakhshān, Hindūstān, Ḥiṣār-i Shādmān, and Turkistān.”<sup>39</sup> However, aside from the aforementioned Naẓar Badakhshī we do not find any record of other disciples gathered by him from Badakhshān or references to any ensuing Yasavī presence within the region.

In summary, the available evidence suggests that the Yasavī Sufi order had little or no presence within the Badakhshān region itself, which was generally dominated by the Kubravī and later the Naqshbandī order. As I demonstrate further below, the provenance of the *Risāla* attributed to Yasavī and its preface suggests that it was, instead, contact with Aḥmad Yasavī’s genealogical legacy, and not necessarily the formal Yasavī ‘order’ itself, that served as the impetus for this engagement. One additional and intriguing piece of evidence in this regard comes from a mid-18th-century Kubravī hagiographical work titled *Fataḥāt al-Kubraviyya*, composed in 1163/1749–50 by a Kashmiri author named ‘Abd al-Wahhāb b. Rashīd al-Dīn Kashmīrī ‘Nūrī.’ The author relates that he was a disciple of a Kubravī shaykh from Badakhshān by the name of Akmal al-Dīn Muḥammad Kāmil al-Badakhshī, who was a descendant of Aḥmad Yasavī whose family originated from Tashkent.<sup>40</sup> While the figure in this case is clearly associated with the Kubravī, and not the Yasavī Sufi order, the facts of his natural descent from Yasavī and his family origins in Tashkent suggest a connection with the genealogical tradition associated with Yasavī from which the text under consideration in this paper originated.

39 Sulṭān Aḥmad al-Ḥiṣārī Ḥazīnī, *Jāmi‘ al-murshidīn*, MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, No. orient. Oct. 2847: f. 89b.

40 ‘Abd al-Wahhāb b. Rashīd al-Dīn Kashmīrī Nūrī, *Fataḥāt al-Kubraviyya*, MS Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby Or. 11: ff. 267b–268a. This same figure is also mentioned, along with the reference to his descent from Aḥmad Yasavī, in the work of the 18th-century Kashmiri author Muḥammad A’ẓam in the account of the Kubraviyya in his *Ashjār al-khuld*, MS Tashkent, IVANUZ 498/11: ff. 171b–172a.

#### 4 The Ismāʿīlīs in the Khanate of Khoqand

While there is evidence attesting to the presence of figures linked genealogically, if not initiatically, with Aḥmad Yasavī active within Badakhshān itself, a more likely possibility is that the encounter between the Ismāʿīlīs and the *Risāla* occurred not within Badakhshān, but rather within the Turkistān region of Central Asia, where Yasavī's own career was based (and where his shrine sits today), where many of the genealogical lineages extending from him were most active, and where the preface to the *Risāla* originated.<sup>41</sup> While there is no evidence for an Ismāʿīlī presence in this region in earlier centuries, the rise of a newly established independent polity centered in the city of Khoqand in the Ferghana Valley in the early 18th century (which later became the Khanate of Khoqand) led to a remarkable period of economic growth in the valley.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, over the course of the 18th century a substantial number of people from the mountainous territories bordering on the Ferghana Valley began to migrate into the valley seeking new economic opportunities.<sup>43</sup> These mountaineers were generally known in the Ferghana Valley and elsewhere in Central Asia under the somewhat pejorative term 'Ghalcha,' which in later Soviet terminology became relabeled as 'Mountain Tajik.'

A more substantial and organized migration from the Pamirs into the Ferghana Valley occurred starting in the beginning of the 19th century, during

41 The historical region of Turkistān (not to be confused with the present-day city of Turkistan, formerly Yasī, where the shrine of Aḥmad Yasavī is located) is one that corresponds roughly with the territory abutting the Syr Darya River in present-day southern Kazakhstan and northern Uzbekistan. The region was historically characterized as an urban zone with a largely sedentary Turkic population, which served as a bridge between the steppe and the Iranian urban civilization to the south, and as a facilitator of Islamization among the nomadic Turks to the north. Among others, it includes the historical cities of Tashkent, Sayram, Otrar, and Yasī, with the latter becoming known popularly as Ḥaḍrat-i Turkistān, in reference to the presence there of the shrine of Yasavī, and later simply as Turkistan. See further W. Barthold, C.E. Bosworth, and C. Poujol, "Turkistān, Turkestan." *Encyclopædia of Islam, Second Edition* 10 (2000): 679-81; A.K. Muminov, "Islam in the Syr Darya Region from the Twelfth to the Fourteenth Century." In *Kazakhstan: Religions and Society in the History of Central Eurasia*, ed. G.L. Bonora, N. Pianciola, and P. Sartori (Turin: Allemandi, 2009): 113-24.

42 On the Khanate of Khoqand see S.C. Levi, *The Rise and Fall of Khoqand, 1709-1876: Central Asia in the Global Age* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017); B.M. Babadzhonov, *Kokandskoe khanstvo: vlast', politika, religii* (Tokyo and Tashkent: NIHU Program Islamic Area Studies Center, University of Tokyo, and Institut Vostokovedeniia Akademii Nauk Respubliki Uzbekistan, 2010).

43 Levi, *The Rise and Fall of Khoqand*: 29; T.K. Beisembiev, "Migration in the Qōqand Khanate in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries." In *Migration in Central Asia: Its History and Current Problems*, ed. H. Komatsu, C. Obiya, and J.S. Shoerberlein (Osaka: Japan Center for Area Studies, National Museum of Ethnology, 2000): 35-40.

the reign of ʿĀlim Khān (r. 1799-1811). Early in his reign, ʿĀlim Khān undertook a sweeping reorganization and modernization of the Khoqandi military, establishing a 'New Army' (*Sipāh-i jadīd*) as a specialized military force that would be personally accountable to him, the backbone of which consisted of a newly-recruited body of Ghalcha troops.<sup>44</sup> While the bulk of these Ghalcha troops hailed from Sunnī-majority regions, some troops were also drawn from the predominately Ismāʿīlī regions of Shughnān, Rūshān and Chitrāl.<sup>45</sup> The primary benefit that ʿĀlim Khān perceived in the Ghalcha troops was their autonomy from fractious Uzbek intra-tribal politics. Due to their minority status, these troops would be entirely dependent upon ʿĀlim Khān's patronage for their position and hence far less likely to seek alliances with other elements within the Khanate to challenge his authority. While the *Sipāh-i jadīd* was formally disbanded upon ʿĀlim Khān's overthrow, nonetheless the Ghalchas continued to play a prominent role in the military and administrative affairs of the Khanate long thereafter. In particular, Ghalcha troops are known to have played a central role in the conquest of the city of Turkistan in 1815.<sup>46</sup> A Ghalcha commander from the majority-Ismāʿīlī region of Chitrāl named Lashkar Beglārbegī also held the post of governor of Tashkent from 1816 to 1841, and under his command, according to Timur Beisembiev, "the domination of Khokand over southern Kazakhstan reached its zenith."<sup>47</sup>

While the involvement of the Ghalcha in the affairs of Khoqand has been noted in the scholarship on the Khanate, to date this factor has remained completely unexamined in scholarship on the history of Badakhshān or of the Central Asian Ismāʿīlī tradition. The Ismāʿīlī presence in the region would have undoubtedly led to many opportunities for social contacts with local communities in the Ferghana Valley and the Turkistān region (most likely under the guise of *taqīyya*), which in turn are likely to have had significant ripple effects within the communities from which these Ismāʿīlīs emerged. It was from among these contacts during this period that we might identify the context for the Ismāʿīlī encounter with the text attributed to Aḥmad Yasavī. In the next section I will discuss some earlier traditions connected with Aḥmad Yasavī among the Ismāʿīlīs of Badakhshān before turning to a discussion of the *Risāla* attributed to Yasavī and its provenance.

44 Levi, *The Rise and Fall of Khoqand*: 82-88.

45 Mullā Niyāz Muḥammad Khūqandī, *Tārīkh-i Shahrukhi*, ed. N.N. Pantusov (Kazan: Tipografia Imperatorskago Universiteta, 1885): 42-44.

46 Muḥammad Ḥakīm Khān, *Muntakhab al-tavārikh*, ed. Y. Kawahara and K. Haneda, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 2009): vol. 2, 133-36.

47 T.K. Beisembiev, "Farghana's Contacts with India in the 18th and 19th Centuries." *Journal of Asian History* 28, no. 2 (1994): 126.



## 5 Aḥmad Yasavī and the Ismāʿīlis of Badakhshān

Broadly speaking, we can identify four major legacies associated with Aḥmad Yasavī within the Islamic world. The first is the initiatic lineages extending from him, or what we might term the formal Yasavī Sufi order. The second is a literary legacy associated with the body of Turkic poetry ascribed (almost certainly anachronistically) to Yasavī, known as the *Dīvān-i ḥikmat*.<sup>48</sup> As noted in the introduction, scholarship on the Ismāʿīli-Sufi engagement to date has focused almost singularly on the question of literary and poetic engagement and, to a much lesser extent, on the relationship of the Ismāʿīlis with formal Sufi orders. Yet while these two legacies are the ones most widely associated in popular perceptions of Aḥmad Yasavī today, they are also the ones that have the least relevance for the Ismāʿīli engagement with the legacy of Yasavī. As noted above, the Yasavī Sufi order had little or no historical presence in Badakhshān, and while Ismāʿīlis have indeed displayed a long history of engagement with Sufi poetry, there is no evidence within the Ismāʿīli literary tradition of interest in the *Dīvān-i ḥikmat*. Instead, it was the two remaining and lesser-known legacies associated with Yasavī that served as the context for the Ismāʿīli engagement with the Yasavī tradition, namely his shrine and the genealogical traditions associated with him.

The name of Aḥmad Yasavī appears in a number of contexts within Ismāʿīli literature, but most notably in the context of a specific narrative tradition in which reference is made to the four “*pīrs* of the pillars.” These four individuals include Aḥmad Yasavī, Nāṣir-i Khusraw, Imām ‘Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā (d. 203/818), whose shrine is found in the Iranian city of Mashhad, and the renowned Indian saint of the Chishtī order, Farīd al-Dīn Ganj-i Shakar (d. 664/1265), whose shrine is in the town of Pākpatan in the Punjab province of modern-day Pakistan. This narrative finds its fullest elaboration in oral tradition, in which it is claimed that these four figures had a role in spreading the Ismāʿīli *daʿwa*,<sup>49</sup> but it appears in a more attenuated form in a number of written sources as well. One example is found in an anonymous doctrinal work titled *Bāb dar bayān-i ṭarīqat va ḥaqīqat*.<sup>50</sup> This is a didactic text designed as a sort of hand-

48 On the *Dīvān-i ḥikmat* and the question of its authorship see D. DeWeese, “Ahmad Yasavi and the *Divan-i Hikmat* in Soviet Scholarship.” In *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, ed. M. Kemper and S. Conermann (New York: Routledge, 2011): 262–90.

49 A.A. Bobrinskoĭ, “Sekta Ismail’ia v russkikh i bukharskikh predelakh Sredneĭ Azii: geograficheskoe rasprostranenie i organizatsiia,” *Ėtnograficheskoe Obozrenie*, no. 2 (1902): 12–13.

50 *Bāb dar bayān-i ṭarīqat va ḥaqīqat*, MS Dushanbe, Institute of Oriental Studies, Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, 1959/14zh. For the catalog description see A. Bertel’s and M. Bakoev, *Alfavitnyĭ katalog rukopiseĭ, obnaruzhennykh v Gorno-Badakhshanskoĭ avtonomnoĭ oblasti ėkspeditsieĭ 1959–1963* (Moscow: Nauka, 1967): 31 (#26). The manuscript is undated.

book for members of the Ismāʿīlī religious leadership, whose structure follows a strict question and answer format (“If they ask.... answer...”), addressing a wide range of doctrinal and theological issues. Among the questions addressed in the work is the following: “If they ask ‘Who are the four *pīrs* of the pillars (*rukṅ*)?’ Answer: ‘The first, the head of Turkistān, is Khoja Aḥmad Yasavī; the second, the chest of Khurāsān, is Imām ‘Alī Mūsā Riḍā; the third, the foot of Hindūstān, is Shaykh Farīd Shakar-Ganj; the fourth, the back of Kūhistān, is Ḥaḍrat-i Sulṭān Sayyid Nāṣir-i Khusraw.’”<sup>51</sup>

I have examined this specific narrative tradition at some length elsewhere and hence will only briefly discuss it here.<sup>52</sup> In brief, various hypotheses have been offered over the years to explain the presence of these individuals’ names within Ismāʿīlī texts, generally resorting to a vague and ahistorical assertion of ‘influence’ or ‘syncretism’ between the Ismāʿīlī and Sufi traditions. However, previous scholarship was unaware of the presence of this same narrative in a number of earlier, non-Ismāʿīlī sources, most notably in a mid-17th-century Kubravī hagiographical compendium titled *Jāmiʿ al-salāsil*, composed by Majd al-Dīn ‘Alī Badakhshānī.<sup>53</sup> These earlier references clarify that the narrative discussing these four figures originated in connection with the shrine of Nāṣir-i Khusraw, as part of an effort to claim a place of prestige for the site among the more well-known shrines of the eastern Islamic world.<sup>54</sup> This narrative, which I have termed ‘The Narrative of the Four Pillars,’ is one among a series of devices that appears to have been employed by the shrine’s keepers and other constituencies connected with the shrine, beginning in the Mongol period, in order to secure patronage for the site from Sunnī rulers, and which reflected an effort to obscure Nāṣir-i Khusraw’s identity as an Ismāʿīlī and to establish his reputation as a Sunnī holy man. This legitimizing function is realized here through the positioning of Nāṣir-i Khusraw and his shrine alongside these other three figures, each of whom is also associated with a prominent shrine that had been constructed or reconstructed under Timurid patronage; this includes that of Imām ‘Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā as well, whose shrine enjoyed a

51 *Bāb dar bayān-i ṭarīqat va ḥaqīqat*: f. 154b.

52 Beben, “Reimagining *Taqīyya*”: 98-106.

53 Majd al-Dīn ‘Alī Badakhshānī, *Jāmiʿ al-salāsil*, MS Aligarh, Mawlana Azad Library, Aligarh Muslim University, Shah Munir Alam no. 3/3: ff. 347a-348b. This same narrative is also found in a number of ‘craft-*risālas*’ from Central Asia from the pre-Soviet period, in which the name of Nāṣir-i Khusraw is sometimes replaced with that of Khoja Uvays al-Qarānī; see J.E. Dağyeli, *Gott liebt das Handwerk: Moral, Identität und religiöse Legitimierung in der mittelasiatischen Handwerks-risāla* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2011): 196-97.

54 See further my discussion in Beben, “The Legendary Biographies of Nāṣir-i Khusraw”: 173-231.

long tradition of patronage by Sunnī rulers and pilgrimage among Sunnī communities in Khurāsān before the Safavid era.<sup>55</sup>

Consequently, the appearance of a narrative positioning Aḥmad Yasavī alongside Nāṣir-i Khusraw within Ismāʿīlī literature emerged as a result of the ‘inheritance’ or appropriation by the Ismāʿīlīs of a narrative tradition that originated among non-Ismāʿīlī constituencies connected with his shrine. Due to its being under the control of Sunnī authorities, the shrine of Nāṣir-i Khusraw has remained largely inaccessible to Ismāʿīlīs throughout most of its history. In later centuries, however, the ‘Narrative of the Four Pillars’ began to circulate widely within the literature and oral traditions of the Central Asian Ismāʿīlīs in a manner which obscured its initial connection with the shrine of Nāṣir-i Khusraw and gave it a more explicitly Ismāʿīlī coloring and relevance, imaginatively transforming Nāṣir’s companions in the narrative into Ismāʿīlī *dāʿīs*. It is important to note, therefore, that the ‘adoption’ of Aḥmad Yasavī within the Ismāʿīlī tradition of Badakhshān almost certainly did not emerge from any sort of historical connection or special affinity between the Ismāʿīlī and Yasavī traditions, but rather materialized as a result of the fact that Yasavī was ‘packaged’ within a narrative tradition concerning Nāṣir-i Khusraw that was adopted by Ismāʿīlīs, and subsequently re-employed as part of an effort in the 18th and 19th century to reclaim the legacy of Nāṣir and to expand the influence of the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwa* within and beyond Badakhshān. Hence, the subsequent interest on the part of Ismāʿīlīs in the legacies of Aḥmad Yasavī that were encountered in Turkistān must be understood in the context of his position within this received tradition, and not necessarily taken as evidence for any prior encounter between the Ismāʿīlīs and the Yasavī Sufi order. Rather, it was most likely an encounter with living communities claiming a genealogical, and not only an initiatic connection with Yasavī that informed the subsequent literary adoption of a work ascribed to Yasavī within the manuscript tradition of the Ismāʿīlīs. I will turn now to a discussion of the literary artifact that emerged from that encounter.

## 6 The Treatise Attributed to Aḥmad Yasavī: The Preface

The *Risāla* attributed to Aḥmad Yasavī is found in a manuscript that was identified during a series of Soviet research expeditions in the Badakhshān region led by Andrei Bertel’s and Mamadvafo Bakoev between 1959 and 1963.

55 M. Farhat, “Islamic Piety and Dynastic Legitimacy: The Case of the Shrine of ‘Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā in Mashhad (10th-17th Century)” (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2002).

The photostat of the manuscript is currently held at the Rudaki Institute of Oriental Studies and Written Heritage of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, catalogued as 1959-25, having been photographed during the first of the five summer research expeditions.<sup>56</sup> The codex is undated, but based on the identity of the copyist it can be tentatively dated to the mid to late 19th century. Aside from the work presently under discussion here, the codex also contains a number of Ismāʿīlī texts, most of which are attested from other sources but whose date cannot be ascertained. These include a number of treatises offering classificatory schemes of ethics and conduct, such as *Haft hudūd-i dīn* ('The Seven Ranks of Religion')<sup>57</sup> and the *Haft gunāh* ('The Seven Sins'), many of which are attributed to Nāṣir-i Khusraw, and which are indicative of the overarching concern demonstrated by the copyist in assembling the codex.

The manuscript was copied by Sayyid Ulfat Shāh,<sup>58</sup> who was the son of a prominent sayyid and landlord from the Ghund region of Shughnān named Ḥukūmat Shāh.<sup>59</sup> Another son of Ḥukūmat Shāh, named Dilāvar Shāh, is mentioned in a property deed from Shughnān as having previously served as a minister (*vazīr*) in the Khanate of Khoqand (*vilāyat-i Khūqand*) under Muḥammad Khudāyār Khān.<sup>60</sup> Sayyid Ulfat Shāh is also known to have served as a scribe to a prominent *pīr* of Badakhshān, Sayyid Farrukh Shāh, and traveled in his company to Bombay in 1858 to meet with the Ismāʿīlī Imām Ḥasan ʿAlī Shāh (Aga Khan I).<sup>61</sup> Hence, the copyist of the manuscript can be connected both with the network of Ismāʿīlīs engaged with the Khanate of Khoqand

56 For the published report of this expedition, which includes a brief mention of the manuscript, see A. Bertel's, "Otchet o rabote Pamirskoi ekspeditsii Otdela Vostokovedeniia i pis'mennogo nasledia Akademii Nauk Tadzhikskoi SSR (Avgust 1959 g.)." *Izvestiia Akademii Nauk Tadzhikskoi SSR: Ot. obshchestvennykh nauk* 29, no. 2 (1962): 11-16.

57 This work is part of a broader genre of Ismāʿīlī texts outlining the various ranks or stations of the *daʿwa* and their cosmological correspondences; see Virani, *Ismailis in the Middle Ages*: 73-76.

58 The scribe's name is given on f. 121a.

59 Information related to me by Dr. Umed Mamadsherozodshoev, 22 May 2019.

60 For the text of the document see Mamadsherozodshoev and Kawahara, eds., *Documents from Private Archives in Right-Bank Badakhshan*: vol. 2, 206 (#50, Kharugh 3). The document is badly damaged and the date is missing. Muḥammad Khudāyār Khān reigned on three separate occasions: 1844-58, 1862-63, and 1865-75 (Levi, *The Rise and Fall of Khoqand*: xix). The use of the phrase "in the time of (*dar zamān-i*)" Khudāyār Khān in the document in the past tense might be taken to suggest that he was no longer the ruling khan at the time of writing, although it also may have been written during one of his multiple interregnums.

61 Ė. Khodzhibekov, *Ismailitskie dukhovnye nastavniki (pīry) i ikh rol' v obshchestvenno-politicheskoi i kul'turnoi zhizni Shughnana (vtoraia polovina XIX—30-e gody XX vv.)* (Dushanbe: Bukhoro, 2015): 24.

and with one of the most prominent Ismā'īlī *pīrs* of the 19th century. As I will demonstrate, both of these are important factors when considering the question of the motivation for reproducing the text attributed to Yasavī found within the codex.

The text of interest for our discussion here is found on folios 99b to 101a of MS 1959-25. The text is given no title and it begins abruptly with an account of the spiritual training of Aḥmad Yasavī, followed immediately by a short treatise attributed to Yasavī.<sup>62</sup> While the treatise itself is of obvious interest, in fact the account of Yasavī's training that precedes it is in some respects of even greater interest for our purposes, as it allows us to establish, with great certainty, the source for the text. This finding holds a number of critical implications for understanding the historical engagement between the Ismā'īlī and Yasavī tradition. The opening section of the text reads as follows:

And thus, the master (*ustād*) of Khoja Aḥmad Yasavī, may God sanctify his spirit, was Khoja Khiḍr. His *shaykh-i irādat* was Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Suhravardī, and his shaykh was Bābā Raṭan, and his shaykh was 'Alī Murtadā, upon whom be peace, and his shaykh was Muḥammad the Prophet of God, peace and blessings be upon him and his family. His *shaykh-i khalvatī* was Shaykh Najm al-Dīn Ṭalaba-yi Ṭūsī, and his shaykh was Abū Naṣr Sarrāj, and his shaykh was Abū 'Abdullāh b. Muḥammad al-Murt'aish, and his shaykh was Shaykh Sarī Saqaṭī, and his shaykh was Ma'rūf Karkhī, and his shaykh was Dāwud Ṭā'ī, and his shaykh was Ḥabīb 'Ajāmī, and his shaykh was Ḥasan Basrī, and his shaykh was 'Alī Murtaḍā, upon whom be peace, and his shaykh was Muḥammad Muṣṭafā, peace and blessings be upon him and his family.

There are several aspects of this account of Yasavī's training that are of interest here. Nearly all of the accounts of Aḥmad Yasavī found in the various sources agree on the fact of his having had multiple masters in the course of his spiritual training, reflecting a common trope in hagiographical narratives of the training of prominent Sufis, which is often used as a means to legitimize an individual's legacy among multiple constituencies. In particular, the mention of training under the legendary figure of Khiḍr is widely reported in the accounts of Yasavī, reflecting likewise a common trope in many accounts of the training of Sufi masters; while his role is not specified here, in other sources Khiḍr is depicted as having bestowed upon Yasavī his method of *dhikr*. The account presented here agrees in other respects with the notion that Yasavī received

62 For the catalog entry for the preface see Bertel's and Bakoev, *Alfavitnyī katalog*: 54, no. 104.

training in different aspects of the Sufi path from different masters, differentiating between his *shaykh-i irādat* ('shaykh of attachment'), or what we might term his 'training shaykh', and another individual who is credited with training him more specifically in the practice of *khalvat*, or the Sufi practice of retreat and meditation. However, while the account presented here conforms more broadly with the trend of depicting Aḥmad Yasavī as having had multiple masters in the course of his Sufi training, its identification of these teachers differs quite widely from what is found in the majority of other sources.

There is one version of the account of Aḥmad Yasavī's spiritual training that has been nearly universally mentioned in the sources since at least the 16th century, and which interestingly finds no reflection in the text under discussion here. This is a tradition which, to put it briefly, claims Yasavī as having been the third successor of the renowned 12th century Central Asian shaykh Yūsuf Hamadānī, considered as the founding father of the Khojagānī Sufi tradition of Central Asia, the predecessor to the Naqshbandīyya. According to this narrative tradition, Yasavī choose to depart from Hamadānī's *khānaqāh* in Bukhara to establish his own community in Turkistān, after which his position was assumed by 'Abd al-Khāliq Ghijduvānī. As Devin DeWeese has demonstrated, this tradition linking Aḥmad Yasavī with the Khojagānī tradition is clearly a fabrication of Naqshbandī partisans who sought to neutralize and subsume the Yasaviyya by depicting it as being merely a wayward branch of the Khojagānī/Naqshbandī tradition, an act which was rendered easier on account of the fact that the Yasavī tradition itself appears not to have developed a textualized variant of Yasavī's hagiography until after this Naqshbandī version had already become established.<sup>63</sup> Elements of this narrative tradition can be traced in Khojagānī/Naqshbandī sources as early as the 14th century, but it became widely popularized and canonized by the early 16th century through its presentation in the Naqshbandī hagiographical compendium *Rashaḥāt-i 'ayn al-ḥayāt*, which arguably became the most popular and most widely copied hagiographical work in early modern Central Asia.<sup>64</sup> From the 16th century onwards, this narrative became established as the definitive account of Yasavī's spiritual training, to the extent that it became widely accepted even in Yasavī sources; it is almost universally found in popular accounts of Aḥmad

63 D. DeWeese, "The Mashā'ikh-i Turk and the Khojagān: Rethinking the Links between the Yasavī and the Naqshbandī Sufi Traditions." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, no. 2 (1996): 180-207.

64 Fakhr al-Dīn 'Alī b. Ḥusayn Wā'iz Kāshifī, *Rashaḥāt-i 'ayn al-ḥayāt*, ed. 'Alī Aṣghar Mu'iniyān, 2 vols. (Tehran: 2536 Sh./1977): vol. 1, 17-19.

Yasavī today, and was widely accepted in scholarship prior to DeWeese's debunking of the narrative.

In short, the version of Aḥmad Yasavī's biography found in the *Rashaḥāt*, or in texts dependent upon it, is what one would almost certainly expect to find in a text composed outside of the Yasavī tradition. As one illustration of this, we can point to the treatment of Yasavī that appears in the aforementioned *Jāmi' al-salāsil* of Majd al-Dīn 'Alī Badakhshānī, whose account of Yasavī is merely an abbreviation of that found in the *Rashaḥāt*.<sup>65</sup> The version of Yasavī's biography found in the *Rashaḥāt*, therefore, is what one would naturally expect to find in a text produced in Badakhshān or in a context of merely passive engagement with the legacy of Aḥmad Yasavī. It is noteworthy, therefore, that the account of Yasavī's spiritual training found in the text in question does not represent this popular tradition, but rather represents a far more obscure version of his biography found in a much more specific manuscript tradition.

By contrast with the widely popular narrative of Yasavī's discipleship under Yūsuf Hamadānī, the version of Yasavī's training at the hands of Shihāb al-Dīn 'Umar Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234), such as is found in the text in question, is largely an internal Yasavī tradition, although variants of it appear in a number of other sources as well. However, while the mention of Suhrawardī is also widely represented in the sources (in most cases being mentioned alongside the account of his training under Yūsuf Hamadānī), the mention of his additional training at the hands of a figure by the name of Najm al-Dīn Ṭūsī (or Ṭalaba-yi Ṭūsī) is found only in a very restricted body of sources.<sup>66</sup> By contrast with Hamadānī or Suhrawardī, this individual is utterly obscure and is entirely unknown elsewhere. Furthermore, in most sources that do mention him, his name is simply provided without any further information. There is only one known source that provides further information on this individual, in which he is granted a *silsila* through the 10th-century Khurāsānī Sufi master Abū Naṣr Sarrāj, as is found in MS 1959-25. The question of the historicity of this Najm al-Dīn's connection with either Sarrāj or Yasavī, or even that of his very

65 Badakhshānī, *Jāmi' al-salāsil*: ff. 274b-275a.

66 Aside from the source discussed below, this reference to Najm al-Dīn Ṭūsī as the *shaykh-i khabatī* of Aḥmad Yasavī is also found in an account of Yasavī that appears in a 15th-century hagiographical account of the Samarqandi saint Nūr al-Dīn Baṣīr; see Abū'l-Ḥasan b. Khwāja Sayf al-Dīn, *Risāla-yi Ḥaḍrat-i Quṭb al-aqṭāb Shaykh Nūr al-Dīn Baṣīr*, MS St. Petersburg, SPIVR, B4464/11: f. 166a. The account of Yasavī's training that appears in this text is very similar in most respects to that found in MS 1959-25, although it omits the additional information on the *silsila* of Ṭūsī found therein, thereby eliminating it as a possible candidate for its source text. Najm al-Dīn Ṭūsī is also briefly mentioned as a teacher of Yasavī in the works of the aforementioned Ḥazīnī, although here his name is mentioned (without further elaboration) alongside those of Hamadānī and Suhrawardī.

existence, is beyond the scope of this discussion; what is significant here is the fact that his connection with Sarrāj is reported in only one single text, which hence may be almost certainly established as the source for the account of Aḥmad Yasavī in MS 1959-25.

The source in question is found in the form of an appendix to some manuscripts of a 14th-century Turkic text; the text itself is found in two separate redactions, one of which is untitled while the other bears the title *Ḥadiqat al-ʿarifin*.<sup>67</sup> While the appendix bearing the account of Yasavī's training appears inconsistently across the manuscript record, versions of it are found appended to copies of both redactions, which suggests that its formulation likely preceded the splitting of the textual tradition, although it is not clear if it is contemporaneous with the text itself (the earliest known copy in which the appendix appears is from the 17th century). The text was authored by a Yasavī shaykh named Ishāq Khoja, who traced his *silsila* to Aḥmad Yasavī through his teacher Ismāʿīl Atā. The text is significant for a number of reasons, above all for its being the earliest surviving text produced within the Yasavī tradition. Of more specific interest for our purposes is the inclusion in the work of a genealogy and legendary account of a figure named Ishāq Bāb, portrayed in the text as a descendant of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya and as an ancestor to Aḥmad Yasavī, his brother ʿAbd al-Jalīl, through whom the author of the text traces his own genealogy, and their role in the Muslim conquest and Islamization of the Turkistān region. Variants of this same narrative and its accompanying genealogical tradition are found recorded in a wide range of documents in Central Asia between the 14th and the 20th century, a selection of which has recently been published.<sup>68</sup>

The genealogical tradition represented in the work of Ishāq Khoja is linked with the phenomenon of the 'Khoja' families of present-day Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, or particular familial groups who claim descent from Ishāq Bāb, Aḥmad Yasavī, or other early Islamizing figures of the Turkistān region, and thence a sayyid or 'Alid lineage.<sup>69</sup> In the pre-Soviet era these Khoja families

67 On the text see D. DeWeese, "Yasavian Legends on the Islamization of Turkistan." In *Aspects of Altaic Civilization III*, ed. D. Sinor (Bloomington: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, Indiana University, 1990): 1-19.

68 DeWeese and Muminov, eds., *Islamization and Sacred Lineages in Central Asia*.

69 On the Khoja tradition, see in particular D. DeWeese, "Foreword" to *Islamization and Sacred Lineages in Central Asia: The Legacy of Ishaq Bab in Narrative and Genealogical Traditions*, vol. 2: *Genealogical Charters and Sacred Families: Nasab-Namas and Khoja Groups Linked to the Ishaq Bab Narrative, 19th-21st Centuries*, ed. D. DeWeese and A.K. Muminov (Almaty: Daik, 2008): 6-33; and A.K. Muminov, "Veneration of Holy Sites of the mid-Sirdar'ya Valley: Continuity and Transformation." In *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the Early 20th Centuries*, vol. 1, ed. M. Kemper,



performed important roles exercising political and social leadership within the Turkistān region and beyond, being noted particularly for their claims to custodianship rights for the shrine of Aḥmad Yasavī,<sup>70</sup> and to a more limited extent these claims to various forms of social and religious authority have been reasserted once again in the post-Soviet era.<sup>71</sup> It was chiefly within the circles of these Khoja communities of Turkistān that the work of Ishāq Khoja and the account of Aḥmad Yasavī appended to it was transmitted; accordingly, the text should not be considered solely a product of the Yasavī ‘order’ in the narrow sense of the term, but rather, it may be considered as part of a local genealogical tradition rooted in the Turkistān region and as an integral aspect of the sacred history and geography of the region. It is interesting to note, therefore, that the account of Yasavī’s training found in MS 1959-25 is a nearly

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A. von Kügelgen, and D. Yermakov (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1996): 355-67; Idem., “Die Qoʻzas: Arabische Genealogien in Kasachstan.” In *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the Early 20th Centuries*, vol. 2: *Inter-regional and Inter-ethnic Relations*, ed. M. Kemper, A. von Kügelgen, and A.J. Frank (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1998): 193-209. See also R.M. Mustafina, *Predstavleniia, kulʹty, obriady u Kazakhov (v kontekste bytovogo Islama v iuzhnom Kazakhstane v kontse XIV-XX vv.)* (Almaty: Qazaq Universiteti, 1992); R. Ia. Rassudova, “Semeinye gruppy: odna iz form organizatsii truda v oroshaemykh raionakh Srednei Azii (XIX—pervaia polovina XX v.)” *Strany i narody Vostoka* 25 (1987): 68-88; Ė.Ė. Zhandarbek, “Īasaviia i ětnicheskaia istoriia naseleniia Desht-i Kipchaka.” In *Podvizhniki Islama: kulʹt sviatykh i sufizm v Srednei Azii i na Kavkaze*, ed. S.N. Abashin and V.O. Bobrovnikov (Moscow: Vostochnoi Literatury, 2003): 326-35. It should be noted that the lineages of Ishāq Bāb and Aḥmad Yasavī trace their descent from Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya and hence formally claim an ‘Alid but not a sayyid lineage; however, this distinction is often obscured in popular narratives and it is not uncommon to find Aḥmad Yasavī or his descendants referred to as sayyids. More broadly, the various lineages belonging to the category of Khoja are sometimes collapsed in popular understanding in Central Asia to mean simply ‘of Arab origin’; see R. Ia. Rassudova, “Termin khodzha v toponimii Srednei Azii.” In *Onomastika Srednei Azii* (Moscow: Nauka, 1978): 115-28. This transformation of the term Khoja into an ethnic or ‘national’ category that Rassudova documented may reflect an effort by these groups in the Soviet era to maintain a sense of communal distinctiveness while obscuring politically problematic claims to specifically ‘Alid or sayyid status.

70 D. DeWeese, “The Politics of Sacred Lineages in 19th-Century Central Asia: Descent Groups Linked to Khwaja Ahmad Yasavi in Shrine Documents and Genealogical Charters.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31, no. 4 (1999): 507-30.

71 On Khoja communities in contemporary Kazakhstan see B.G. Privratsky, *Muslim Turkistan: Kazak Religion and Collective Memory* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2001); Idem., “Turkistan Belongs to the Qojas’: Local Knowledge of a Muslim Tradition.” In *Devout Societies vs. Impious States?: Transmitting Islamic Learning in Russia, Central Asia and China, through the Twentieth Century*, ed. S. A Dudoignon (Berlin: Schwarz, 2004): 161-212; U. Bigozhin, “Shrine, State and Sacred Lineage in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan” (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 2017).

exact Persian translation of the Turkic text found in the appendix to the work of Iṣḥāq Khoja,<sup>72</sup> leaving little doubt that this latter work was the source of the text, and suggesting thereby the possibility of contact on the part of the Ismāʿīlīs with the living Khoja communities of Turkistān, and not merely with the portrayal of Yasavī within Persian literature.

## 7 The Treatise Attributed to Aḥmad Yasavī: The Text and Its Reception

Finally, we turn to the *Risāla* that follows the account of Aḥmad Yasavī's training and which is attributed to Yasavī himself.<sup>73</sup> As noted above, while Yasavī's name today is overwhelmingly associated with the body of Turkic poetry known as the *Dīvān-i ḥikmat*, in fact the bulk of the documentation produced historically within the Yasavī tradition was not in Turkic, but rather in Persian. This includes a large body of texts in Persian attributed (almost certainly anachronistically) to Yasavī himself, including a wide range of poems, treatises, prayers, and other materials, the vast bulk of which remains unpublished.<sup>74</sup> In this sense, the text found in MS 1959-25 may be reckoned simply as another

72 I have consulted MSS no. 3637 (dated 1269/1852-53; f. 213b) and no. 252 (dated 1103/1697; f. 94b) from the Biruni Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan; on the manuscripts see further DeWeese and Muminov, eds., *Islamization and Sacred Lineages in Central Asia*: vol. 1, 65-72. I am grateful to Devin DeWeese for sharing images of the texts with me. There is one noteworthy difference between the Persian version of the text found in MS 1959-25 and all of the known versions of the work of Iṣḥāq Khoja, namely that whereas the teacher to Suhrawardī and his intermediary link with 'Alī is listed as Ḥasan Basrī in the work of Iṣḥāq Khoja, in the Badakhshāni text the name of Ḥasan Basrī is replaced with that of Bābā Raṭān. This name refers to a legendary figure from the Islamic tradition who is said to have been a companion of the Prophet Muḥammad and who thereafter lived a miraculously long life, having served as a guide to many figures within the Sufi tradition; see M. Shafī, "Ratan, Bābā, Ḥāḍjdjī, Abu'l Riḍā." *Encyclopædia of Islam, Second Edition* 8 (1995): 457-59. While his name is not mentioned in any of the known copies of the work of Iṣḥāq Khoja, the depiction of Bābā Raṭān as Suhrawardī's teacher is found in a number of other Yasavī sources, beginning with the work of Ḥazīnī from the 16th century, and hence was most likely original to the source document. This would seem to attest to the presence of another, hitherto unknown version of the appendix to the work of Iṣḥāq Khoja; moreover, its association with the text that follows indicates that this text is not necessarily linked in all cases with the work of Iṣḥāq Khoja, but rather that it may have existed as a separate textual tradition that has thus far only come down to us in that one particular configuration.

73 For the catalog entry for the *Risāla* see Bertel's and Bakoev, *Alfavitnyĭ katalog*: 54, no. 105.

74 For an example of one such text in Persian see A. Erkinov, "Prayer against Fever, Connected with the Name of Khwāja Aḥmad Yasavī." *Manuscripta Orientalia* 10, no. 2 (2004): 53-56.

instance of this body of pseudoepigraphic literature that is already widely attested, distinguished only by its placement in an Ismā'īlī codex. Although the text found in MS 1959-25 is untitled, it can be identified as a copy of a Persian text attributed to Yasavī that is found in a number of manuscripts from Central Asia, titled *Risāla dar ādāb-i ʿarīqat*, which has recently been published in a facsimile edition and Turkish translation.<sup>75</sup> The text is a patterned on a question and answer format (similar to the aforementioned and similarly titled *Bāb dar bayān-i ʿarīqat va ḥaqīqat*). While the text itself does not address any themes that could be characterized or construed as distinctly Shī'ī, it does address some topics that would likely have been of interest to an Ismā'īlī audience in other respects. It begins with a series of questions and answers concerning the stages of the Sufi path, followed by a discussion of various issues concerning the theme of religious conduct (*ādāb*) and particularly of one's comportment in relationship with their spiritual master.

By itself, the text is a fairly generic and unremarkable discussion of Sufi 'rules of conduct.' The interesting question for our purposes is why this text would have been considered worthy of copying by an Ismā'īlī scribe. Naturally, the matter of the *pūr-murīd* or 'master-disciple' relationship that is discussed in the text is one that would be of great interest to Ismā'īlīs. This topic is often portrayed as an essential point of similarity between the Ismā'īlī and Sufi traditions, namely that the relationship between a Sufi devotee and their shaykh is very much like that between an Ismā'īlī believer and the Imām of the Age; therefore, literature produced within the Sufi tradition that addresses this relationship would have had a degree of didactic utility among Ismā'īlīs. However, the equivalence between the role of the Imām and the Sufi shaykh does not account for the full range of similarities between Ismā'īlī and Sufi communities in the pre-modern era or of the various ways in which the literature produced within one community could be received within the other.

75 K. Eraslan and N. Tosun, *Yesevî'nin Fakr-nâmesi ve iki farsça risalesi* (Ankara: Ahmet Yesevi Üniversitesi, 2016): 64-70 (translation) and 116-24 (facsimile). The facsimile is a reproduction of MS 3808 (ff. 313b-316b) of the Biruni Institute of Oriental Studies in Tashkent. In addition, the editors list two other manuscripts in the collection in Tashkent: MSS 6652 and 9175. These copies are not listed in the main Soviet-era catalog of the collection published by A.A. Semenov, *Sobranie vostochnykh rukopisei Akademii Nauk Uzbekskoi SSR*, 11 vols. (Tashkent: Izvestiia Akademii Nauk Uzbekskoi SSR, 1952-87); nor are they listed in the handlist of Sufi manuscripts from this collection published by B. Babadjanov, J. Paul, and A. Krämer, *Kratkii katalog sufiiskikh proizvedenii XVIII-XX vv. iz sobraniia Instituta Vostokovedeniia Akademii Nauk Respubliki Uzbekistan im. al-Biruni* (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 2000). The latter does list a *risāla* attributed to Aḥmad Yasavī in Persian (162-63, MS 5227/2) which may be another copy of the work.

While the Imām unquestionably stands at the apex of the spiritual and organizational hierarchy of the Ismāʿīlīs, his presence and role within the community for nearly all of the period between the end of the Fāṭimid era down to the 20th century was largely a symbolic and abstract one, and the number of Ismāʿīlīs who had direct contact with the Imām was quite small. This was even more so for Ismāʿīlī communities who were further geographically removed from the imāmate, such as those in Central Asia. Therefore, in the absence of the physical presence of the Imām, his representatives, known in Central Asia as the *pīrs* and *khalīfas*, assumed the responsibility for the functional leadership of the community, occupying roles not unlike those of a Sufi shaykh. Accordingly, even though the relationship between Ismāʿīlīs and Sufis in Central Asia was often hostile, nonetheless Ismāʿīlī communities in Central Asia in the early modern period increasingly began to resemble the structure and organization of Sufi communities, in which the leadership (the *pīrs* and *khalīfas*) articulated their own claims to authority through the formulation and presentation of *silsilas* and genealogies, in a similar manner as one sees among Sufi communities in this period.<sup>76</sup> Therefore, while references to the *pīr-murīd* relationship within Sufi literature as received within an Ismāʿīlī context may undoubtedly be taken as an allusion to the relationship with the Imām, in a more concrete sense it may be better understood as a reference to discipleship under those who exercised immediate authority within the community on behalf of the Imām, namely the *pīrs* and *khalīfas*.

The history of these institutions among the Ismāʿīlīs of Central Asia remains poorly understood. Research on this topic to date has focused almost singularly on the colonial era of the late 19th and early 20th century, due primarily to the more extensive documentation available from that period.<sup>77</sup> In the absence of research into earlier periods, the assumption has often been made that the hierarchy represented in the colonial-era documentation constitutes an archaic structure, dating perhaps even to the time of Nāṣir-i Khusraw himself, and having remained relatively unperturbed prior to the ‘first contact’ under

76 Beben, “The Legendary Biographies of Nāṣir-i Khusraw”: 344-402. The genealogical practices of the Ismāʿīlīs of Badakhshān are the focus of an ongoing research project currently underway by myself and several other colleagues. For a preliminary discussion of this project see J.-A. Gross, “Preliminary Notes on the *Naṣab-nāmas* of Badakhshan.” *Shii Studies Review* 2 (2018): 365-71.

77 A. Ioliev, “*Pirship* in Badakhshan: The Role and Significance of the Institute of the Religious Masters (*Pirs*) in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Wakhan and Shughnan.” *Journal of Shiʿa Islamic Studies* 6, no. 2 (2013): 155-76; L.N. Khariukov, *Anglo-Russkoe sopernichestvo v Tsentralʹnoi Azii i Ismailizm* (Moscow: Moskovskogo Universiteta, 1995); Khodzhibekov, *Ismailitskie dukhovnye nastavniki*.

colonial auspices. In large measure, these assumptions rest on an uncritical reading of the Ismāʿīlī sources themselves from this period, which on account of their own legitimation agenda project the image of an unbroken communal tradition dating back to Nāṣir-i Khusraw. Yet, in many respects, the ‘snapshot’ of the Ismāʿīlī community offered in the colonial-era sources is one that appears to have taken shape only in the previous century, spurred by many of the same global developments that would culminate in the arrival of the colonial presence within Shughnān in the late 19th century. Various evidence suggests that the Ismāʿīlī religious institutions of Shughnān and the authority of the *pīrs* underwent a process of strengthening and centralization in the 18th and early 19th century, accompanied by an increasing shift from oral transmission towards textualization.<sup>78</sup> While the reasons for these developments are not clear in their entirety, it is probable that they are connected with the broader geopolitical transformations that Central Asia experienced in the 18th century, of which the emergence of the Khanate of Khoqand in the neighboring Ferghana Valley was one notable outcome.<sup>79</sup> The ripple effects of these developments extended even into the remote valleys of the Pamirs, bringing the Ismāʿīlīs of the region into closer contact not only with new potential threats, but also with prospective patrons, thereby significantly raising the stakes for leadership within the Ismāʿīlī community.

Previous scholarship on the history of Shughnān has largely focused on its isolation and marginality prior to the onset of colonial involvement in the region in the late 19th century. When considering the Ismāʿīlī communities of Shughnān, this isolation may be seen in two senses: in terms of their isolation as a marginalized religious and ethnic minority community, and in terms of Shughnān’s political and geographical remoteness as a region. These two factors were interrelated, as Shughnān’s geographic inaccessibility served as a source of safety and refuge for its Ismāʿīlīs, who were regularly subjected to

78 See further my discussion in “Religious Identity in the Pamirs: The Institutionalization of the Ismāʿīlī *Daʿwa* in Shughnān.” In *Identity, History and Trans-Nationality in Central Asia: The Mountain Communities of Pamir*, ed. D. Dagiev and C. Faucher (London: Routledge, 2018): 123-42; Idem., “The *Kalām-i pīr* and Its Place in the Central Asian Ismaʿīlī Tradition.” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 31 no. 1 (2020): 70-102.

79 Scott Levi has demonstrated how the Khanate of Khoqand may be reckoned as one among a range of new regional states that emerged in Asia and Africa in the century preceding the full onset of European colonialism, whose formations were facilitated by the same intensifying forces of early modern globalization that would eventually culminate in formal colonization. As such, the Khanate of Khoqand may be seen as both a beneficiary and a victim of early modern globalization. See Levi, *The Rise and Fall of Khoqand*: 221-24. I would argue that the highland state of Shughnān, which flourished from the 18th to the early 20th century, may also be reckoned among such formations.

slave raids by their Sunni neighbors. In this sense, Shughnān may be considered a classic example of a highland zone of refuge for communities seeking to avoid predatory states, akin to the phenomenon of Zomia that scholars have posited for highland Southeast Asia.<sup>80</sup> Yet on closer examination, the case of the Ismāʿīlīs of Shughnān reveals a more complex picture, one in which local elites among persecuted and ‘state-avoiding’ communities also benefitted from selective engagement with outside forces.

Accordingly, while the history of pre-colonial Shughnān has often been portrayed as one of splendid isolation, I argue for the need to re-examine this history in light of the emerging emphasis in scholarship on the ‘connected’ or ‘integrated’ histories of early modern Eurasia.<sup>81</sup> It is almost certainly not a coincidence that the centralization of the authority of the *pīrs* in Shughnān occurred concurrently with the engagement with the Khanate of Khoqand, and may have been inspired and facilitated in part through contact with Sufi communities and religious institutions encountered in Turkistān and elsewhere in Central Asia, as the evidence from MS 1959-25 suggests. In this regard, we may note an interesting fact regarding the aforementioned *Bāb dar bayān-i ʿariqat va haqiqat*, which I have mentioned previously for its reference to Aḥmad Yasavī in the context of an iteration of the ‘Narrative of the Four Pillars.’ Beyond this reference to Yasavī, the text is also of interest for our purposes in that its structure very closely matches that of the *Risāla* from MS 1959-25, containing a question and answer format addressing matters of religious ethics and conduct, and addresses many of the same topics, albeit with a more direct emphasis on explicitly Shīʿī themes. In addition, the manuscript in which the

80 J.C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

81 For the classic study in this vein see J. Fletcher, “Integrative History: Parallels and Interconnections in the Early Modern Period, 1500-1800.” *Journal of Turkish Studies* 9 (1985): 37-57. On the relevance of this paradigm for Central Asia see S.C. Levi, “Early Modern Central Asia in World History.” *History Compass* 10/11 (2012): 866-78. Paolo Sartori has also rightly warned against the tendency to see increasing integration as an all-inclusive historical narrative for early modern Central Asia, noting that a number of regions remained largely isolated in this period, even as they experienced processes of intra-regional integration. See his discussion in “On Khvārazmian Connectivity: Two or Three Things that I Know about It.” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 9 (2016): 133-57. To be sure, the Pamirs in many respects has remained a highly marginal region down to the present. My argument here is one of a relative increase in connectivity between the Shughnān region and the rest of Central Asia in the 18th and 19th century. Till Mostowlansky has demonstrated how this tension between marginality and connectivity continues to perform a defining role in conceptions of self-identity in the Pamir region today; see his *Azan on the Moon: Entangling Modernity along Tajikistan’s Pamir Highway* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017).

text is found is recorded as having been copied by the scribe, Sayyid Shāhzāda Maḥmūd b. Shāhzāda Ḥamīd, in Khoqand (*vilāyat-i Qūqand*).<sup>82</sup> Both texts, therefore, might be reckoned as part of a broader literary development having a connection with the Ismāʿīlī engagement with Khoqand, and possibly patterned in part upon Sufi traditions encountered there or elsewhere in Central Asia. Even the term Khoja itself came to be adopted among the Ismāʿīlīs of Central Asia by the early 19th century, being employed in reference to the sayyid families of *pīrs* who traced their lineage to one of the chief disciples of Nāṣir-i Khusraw, thus reflecting a usage analogous to that among the Khojas of Turkistān in the sense of referring to a ‘sacred’ lineage bearing distinct social privileges and responsibilities.<sup>83</sup>

The late 18th and early 19th century was also a period in which the Ismāʿīlī imamate, which hitherto had played a more symbolic and indirect role in the life of the community in Badakhshān, as a result of its strengthened political and economic position in Iran began to intervene more directly in communal affairs and in the conferral of leadership positions within Ismāʿīlī communities across the Muslim world, including in Badakhshān.<sup>84</sup> As comparative studies have demonstrated, the introduction of such external patrons often serves as a spur for the entrenchment and centralization of hierarchies within a given society, and to drive members of those hierarchies towards textualization as a means of rendering their claims to leadership more legible.<sup>85</sup> We may posit therefore a dual push towards centralization and textualization among the

82 *Bāb dar bayān-i tariqat va haqiqat*: f. 135a.

83 The use of the term Khoja in this sense among the Ismāʿīlīs of Central Asia is first attested in a text titled *Silk-i guhar-rīz*, authored c. 1835. On this text and the place of these Khoja lineages within it see Beben, “The Legendary Biographies of Nāṣir-i Khusraw”: 352-57. This should not be conflated with the communal label of ‘Khoja’ that is generally applied to the Nizārī Ismāʿīlīs of the South Asian tradition, which has a separate historical origin; see A. Nanji, *The Nizārī Ismāʿīlī Tradition in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent* (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1978).

84 On the evolution of the Ismāʿīlī imamate in this period see further my discussion in “The Fatimid Legacy and the Foundation of the Modern Nizārī Imamate.” In *The Fatimid Caliphate: Diversity of Traditions*, ed. F. Daftary and S. Jiwa (London: I.B. Tauris and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2017): 192-216.

85 For studies on this phenomenon in the context of Inner Asia see C. Humphrey, “The Uses of Genealogy: A Historical Study of the Nomadic and Sedentarised Buryat.” In *Pastoral Production and Society*, ed. L’Equipe écologie et anthropologie des sociétés pastorales (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979): 325-60; M. Khodarkovsky, *Russia’s Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002): 30-34; D. Prior, “High Rank and Power among the Northern Kirghiz: Terms and Their Problems, 1845-1864.” In *Explorations in the Social History of Modern Central Asia (19th-early 20th century)*, ed. P. Sartori (Leiden: Brill, 2013): 137-80.

Ismā'īlīs in response to the two major patrons who came to play an increasingly important role in the affairs of Badakhshān in the 18th and 19th century, namely the Ismā'īlī imamate and the Khanate of Khoqand. Altogether, the evidence from the text attributed to Aḥmad Yasavī in MS 1959-25 suggests a need to adopt a more historicized understanding of the evolution of authority and textual practices within the Ismā'īlī tradition, and of the ways in which the Ismā'īlīs have engaged with the Sufi traditions of Central Asia. Alongside continued research on the literary engagement between these traditions, I would suggest a further research agenda that situates the Ismā'īlīs within the social context of Islamic Central Asia and which explores the ways in which the Ismā'īlī and Sufi traditions were patterned upon and drew from each other not only in the intellectual realm, but also in the more tangible realm of social praxis and communal organization.

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