Journal of Social and Theological Studies
https://mijournals.com/index.php/jsts



THE NAQSHBANDĪ SILSILA: FROM BUKHARA TO VAKHSHUVOR

https://doi.org/10.57033/mijournals-2026-4-0373

Mekhrojiddin Amonov

Associate Professor, Doctor of Science, Imam Bukhari International Scientific Research Center under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Samarkand, Uzbekistan
E-mail: mirzomerojiddin@gmail.com | *ORCID:* 0000-0001-5872-8721

Received: 10-05-2026
Accepted: 28-05-2026
Published: 09-06-2026

Copyright: © 2026 by the authors. Submitted for open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

Abstract. *The Naqshbandī order is one of the most widely diffused mystical paths of Central Asia. If the history of the order is considered, it may be seen that although the Naqshbandī teaching took shape at Bukhara, new centres appeared in later times in other regions. The article sets out information concerning ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, Mawlānā Muḥammad Zāhid and Sufi Allāhyār, three of the most influential representatives of the Naqshbandī chain, whose lives and activity are directly bound up with the regions of Bukhara, Samarkand and Surkhandarya. All three are among the celebrated spiritual guides of Sufism who carried the Naqshbandī order to Surkhandarya, and it was there that the new centres of the order were founded. Upon the basis of manuscript sources, of epigraphic material from the gravestones of the descendants of Sufi Allāhyār at Chonqaymish and of archival documents, the article traces the movement of the chain from Bukhara through Samarkand and Hisar to Vakhshuvor, and establishes the periods during which each of the three guides occupied the seat of the order.*

Keywords: Central Asia, Naqshbandiyya, manuscript, silsila, ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, Mawlānā Zāhid Vakhshuvārī, Sufi Allāhyār, Surkhandarya, Khwāja Aḥrār, Sufism.

INTRODUCTION

In recent times various opinions have been expressed concerning the life, the activity and the lineage of the representatives of the Naqshbandī order, and various questions have arisen in their turn. This shows that the Naqshbandiyya and its several branches have not yet been fully studied and that many problems remain for research. Attention must first be given to the lineage and to the chain of lineage of this order. The lineage of an order is usually connected to the Prophet Muḥammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, through one of the four rightly guided caliphs; yet in the various sources, in the documents relating to lineage and in the genealogies the chain

of master and disciple and the chain of lineage are given in differing forms, and this has naturally led to the emergence of questions (Shaykh Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2019:20).

From the Prophet Muḥammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, four chains of silsila spread throughout the Muslim world through Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān and ʿAlī. Such a connection indicates that the foundation of Sufism goes back to the Prophet himself. In the sources it is stated that the chain of the orders begins with Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān and ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (Anonymous, n.d.:fol. 9b). The chain of an order is reckoned one of the most reliable aspects of a given path: the silsila is the record of a particular order reaching the Prophet through its shaykh or pīr, that is a genealogy of master and disciple, and it served to convey the foundations of the order from the Messenger of God to the shaykhs who belong to that chain (Shaykh Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf, 2019:20).

The spiritual lineage of the Prophet Muḥammad reached Shaykh Yūsuf Hamadānī through Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, and the historians named it the silsila ṣiddīqiyya. The lineage from Shaykh ʿAbd al-Khāliq Ghijduvānī to Bahāʾ al-Dīn Naqshband was called the Khwājagān-Naqshbandiyya, and from Khwāja Aḥrār Walī onwards it was called the Naqshbandiyya-Aḥrāriyya (Kattayev, 2017). Uzbek and foreign scholars alike have conducted extensive research upon the lives and the activity of the spiritual guides of the Naqshbandī order.

MAIN PART

The Naqshbandī order founded by Bahāʾ al-Dīn Naqshband reached the region of Surkhandarya after his death in 791/1389 through ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, who died in 802/1400, and through the scholarly and spiritual activity of ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār the first new centre of the order was established there. After him Yaʿqūb Charkhī, who died in 851/1447, assumed the position of spiritual guide within the Naqshbandī order and served in that capacity for more than forty years, contributing to the development of the chain; and after his death Khwāja ʿUbaydullāh succeeded to the office of spiritual guidance (Kattayev, 2017).

Khwāja Aḥrār Walī, the son of Khwāja ʿUbaydullāh Maḥmūdkhwāja, who lived from 806/1404 to 895/1490, brought the Naqshbandī lineage from Hisar, through

Yaʿqūb Charkhī, to Samarkand (Karimov, 2003; O‘rinboyev, n.d.). Afterwards one of his disciples, Mawlānā Zāhid Vakhshuvārī, carried the lineage to Vakhshuvor in the present-day Oltinsoy district of the Surkhandarya region and continued the order there until his death in 936/1529, giving the people to enjoy the secrets and the traditions of the path.

Information concerning Mawlānā Zāhid Vakhshuvārī is to be found in various sources and treatises, such as the «ʿIlmiyya» of Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam Dahbedī, the «Nasīmāt al-quds» of Muḥammad Hāshim Kishimī, the «Taʿrīf-i awliyāʾ» of Khurshīd Aḥmad, the «Silsila-yi sharīf» of Muḥammad Ḥaydar, the «Tuḥfat al-zāʾirīn» of Naṣīr al-Dīn Bukhārī, the «Oltinsoyda Vakhshivor bor» of Khurram Khamdamov and the «Vakhshivor» of Abdusattor Jumanazarov, as well as in the author’s own study of the history of Sufi Allāhyār and of Islām Shaykh. Previously unknown details concerning his history may likewise be encountered there.

The Naqshbandī lineage reached not only the territory of Transoxiana but also Khurāsān, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Rūm and Egypt upon the one hand, and China and India upon the other. The words of the historian Abū Ṭāhir Khwāja, the judge of Samarkand, in his book «Samariya», that the charm which drew men to Khwāja Aḥrār was so strong that his sweet conversations were remembered for a lifetime, likewise indicate his high spiritual standing in the world of Sufi teaching (Abu Tohir xoja, 1991).

Various branches were formed from Khwāja Aḥrār Walī: through his disciple Mawlānā Muḥammad Qāḍī to Makhdūm-i Aʿẓam Dahbedī, giving the Naqshbandiyya-Aḥrāriyya-Dahbedī; and through his disciple Mawlānā Zāhid Vakhshuvārī, beginning with Imām Aḥmad Sirhindī, who lived from 971/1564 to 1034/1624, giving the Naqshbandiyya-Aḥrāriyya-Mujaddidiyya (Abd al-Qodir ibn Muhammad-Amin, 2005).

Muḥammad Miyān Maʿṣūm, who lived from 1007/1599 to 1078/1668 and who took over the seat of the order after Aḥmad Sirhindī, came to Bukhara from India through his disciple Ḥājjī Ḥabībullāh Bukhārī, who died in 1111/1699; and as a result the city of Bukhara again became one of the centres of the order. Through Sufi Navrūz Shahrisabzī, a disciple of Ḥājjī Ḥabībullāh Bukhārī, the order was carried to Kitab in the Kashkadarya region, and the new centre of the order became Katlas, that is Kitab (Mirzo Maqsud Dahbediy, 1850:fol. 158a).

Thus, in the Naqshbandī lineage that spread around the world, Sufi Allāhyār came to the seat of the order after Sufi Navrūz Shahrisabzī. He first led the lineage from Kitab

to Samarkand, to the place now known as Chonqaymish in the Nurobod district, and established there a new centre of the order. In the course of his activity Sufi Allāhyār built four mosques and four khānaqāhs, at Kattaqurghon, at Onaziyorat, at Chonqaymish and at Vakhshuvor, together with two madrasas and several pools; he supported the work of education and wrote textbooks upon Sufism, upon jurisprudence and upon creed (Mir Husayn, n.d.).

In that period officials called qāḍī-raʾīs supervised the sending of children to school by their parents (Solijonova, 1998:33-34). In order to secure the continuous attendance of students, attendance was strictly monitored: if a student missed a lesson without reason the teacher sent another student after him, and if he still did not come to the lesson his father was informed (Solijonova, 1998:54). It was specifically laid down that if students studying at the madrasa founded by Sufi Allāhyār in the region of Chonqaymish missed classes for two months and ten days without a valid reason, the head of the madrasa might take a new student in his place (O‘zbekiston Milliy arxivi, Samarkand regional section, fond 18, inventory 1, file 9828:4).

The inscriptions upon the gravestones of the descendants of Sufi Allāhyār at Chonqaymish have been studied and the epigraphic information translated, this information having been supplied by B. Karmysheva, I. Suvonkulov and A. Jumanazarov; the stones were numbered according to their position. According to the information upon the gravestones, Muḥammad Ṣādiq, the son of Eshon Sufi Allāhyār, died in 1180/1766, and his daughter Bībī ʿĀʾisha died in 1174/1760; the name of Ulugh Oy bint Muḥammad Ṣādiq was likewise established.

Sufi Allāhyār resided at Katlas until the death of his teacher Shaykh Sufi Navrūz; thereafter he lived at Kattaqurghon until 1702 and at Chonqaymish and Onaziyorat until the end of 1712. The remainder of his life, from 1713 onwards, he spent at Hisar, at the shrine of Mawlānā Zāhid Vakhshuvārī, where he established a mosque, a khānaqāh and a beautiful garden, and where he died in 1724 (Mirzo Maqsud Dahbediy, 1850:fol. 158a).

CONCLUSION

ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, Mawlānā Zāhid and Sufi Allāhyār are among the greatest spiritual guides of the Naqshbandī order, who left a great mark upon the socio-political,

the economic and the spiritual life of their age and whose fame spread throughout the world in their own time. One of their great contributions to the history of Sufism is that they made the Naqshbandī order one of the greatest orders of the Islamic world; and it has accordingly become clear that these scholars played a worthy part in the diffusion of the Naqshbandī order over a wide area and in its rise to a leading position in Central Asia (Kattayev, 2017).

These three scholars, the outstanding representatives of the Naqshbandī chain, occupied the seat of the order from 1389 to 1400 in the case of ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār, from 1490 to 1529 in the case of Mawlānā Zāhid Vakhshuvārī, and from the years between 1702 and 1712 until 1724 in the case of Sufi Allāhyār. Each of them made a great contribution to the organic continuation of the chain in the seat of the order and served to form new centres of the path.

If it be taken into account that the chain of the order came originally from Bukhara, it becomes clear that in the course of time it was carried to India by way of Kitab, and from there back to Bukhara through the Sufis of Transoxiana; and it becomes clear likewise that the chain of the order which reached Samarkand and Surkhandarya by way of Kitab developed there. The history of Surkhandarya and of the Naqshbandī chain there, which was the spiritual centre of the order for more than three centuries, from 1389 to 1724, calls for yet more extensive research and study by scholars.

REFERENCES

1. Abd al-Qodir ibn Muhammad-Amin. (2005). Majmaʿ al-ansāb wa-l-ashjār (Sh. Kh. Vohidova, A. K. Muminova & B. B. Aminova, Trans. from Arabic, Persian and Turkic). Almaty. 692 p.
2. Abu Tohir xoja. (1991). Samariya (B. Ahmedov et al., Eds.). Tashkent: Kamalak. 81 p.
3. Anonymous. (n.d.). Manuscript in Persian. Treasury of sources of the Imam Bukhari International Scientific Research Center, inv. no. 52.
4. Karimov, E. (2003). Xo‘ja Ahror (hayoti va faoliyati) [Khwāja Aḥrār: his life and activity]. Tashkent: Ma’naviyat. 43 p.
5. Kattayev, K. (2017). Tasavvuf allomalari [The scholars of Sufism]. Tashkent: G‘afur G‘ulom. 320 p.
6. Mir Husayn. (n.d.). Maḥāzin al-taqwā. Manuscript. Manuscript fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, inv. nos. 51 (312 fols.) and 2773 (409 fols., 1215/1800).
7. Mirzo Maqsud Dahbediy. (1850). Rawāʾiḥ al-quds. Manuscript in Persian, nastaʿlīq, 215 fols. Private library of Komilxon Kattayev, no. 7.
8. O‘rinboyev, A. (n.d.). Xoja Ahror. https://ziyouz.uz/ilm-va-fan/tarix/manaviyat-yulduzlari/xoja-ahror-valiy-1404-1490/
9. Gafurova, I. (2020). Вақф мулкчилигининг Туркистон тарихида тутган ўрни. Islom ziyosi, 3(3), 66–74.

10. Bekmirzayev, I., & Gafurova, I. (2021). Islamic Notarial Acts Tradition In The Classic Movarounnakhr Khanafi School. Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry, 12(6), 6710.
11. O‘zbekiston Milliy arxivi, Samarkand regional section, fond 18, inventory 1, file 9828.
12. Shaykh Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf. (2019). Naqshbandiya: vazifalar, zikrlar [The Naqshbandiyya: duties and litanies]. Tashkent: Hilol-Nashr. 160 p.
13. Solijonova, G. F. (1998). Turkistonda o‘qitish-ma’rifatchilik o‘choqlari, ularning ijtimoiy ahamiyati (XIX asr oxiri – XX asr boshlari) [The centres of teaching and enlightenment in Turkestan and their social significance]. Candidate of Historical Sciences dissertation. Tashkent.