

РЕЦЕНЗИИ

Taha Abdollahi-Sohi

(*Alumnus, Faculty of Theology and Islamic Studies, University of Tehran;
16, Azar Str., Tehran, 1417935840; e-mail: tahasohi1377@gmail.com*)

HIJAZ: THE CROSSROAD OF ISLAM

A Review of: al-‘Ujaymī, Ḥasan b. ‘Alī. *Sufis and Their Lodges in the Ottoman Ḥijāz*
(*Khabāyā al-zawāyā “Secrets of the Lodges” & Risāla fī ṭuruq al-ṣūfiyya*
“*Treatise on Sufi Orders*”). Ed. by Naser Dumairieh. Leiden: Brill, 2023, 521 pp.¹

Abstract. This review examines “Sufis and Their Lodges in the Ottoman Ḥijāz” which is a collection of three Arabic treatises, by Ḥasan b. ‘Alī al-‘Uğaymī, concerning the Sufi activities in the pre-Wahhābi Hijaz. After presenting an overview of Dumairieh’s illuminating introduction and al-‘Uğaymī’s treatises, I tried to discuss how this book, and others in its genre, should be understood and how they could contribute to the field of Sufi studies.

Keywords: Sufi Studies, Intellectual History, Ottoman Empire, Sufi Orders, Sufi Lodges, Ḥasan b. ‘Alī al-‘Uğaymī, Hijaz.

“The paths towards God are as numerous as the breaths of creatures” [Ibn ‘Arabī, 2:317].

Considering Hijaz’s current situation, speaking of its Sufi side may come as a surprise. But pre-Wahhābi Hijaz was a major center for Sufi life and the home of more than 150 Sufi masters, 40 Sufi orders, and numerous Sufi lodges. Being the destination for Muslims performing the pilgrimage (*ḥağğ*) to Mecca and visiting the tomb of the Prophet in Medina, Hijaz offers a unique opportunity for knowledge transmission and circulation between different parts of the Islamic world. During the annual pilgrimage, a diverse array of scholars and Sufis would historically exchange books, certifications (*‘iğāzāt*) and knowledge.

¹ I would like to sincerely thank Professor Hossein Kamaly for his valuable comments and insights on the draft of this review.

The rise of two strong and wealthy Empires, the Ottomans and Mughals, and their generous donations led to the establishment of many Sufi institutions in Hijaz. Sufi activities of Hijaz reached their peak in the Ottoman period, the number of Sufi lodges (*ribāṭs*) in Mecca alone increased to 156.

Despite the strong presence of Sufi orders in pre-Wahhābi Hijaz, academic literature on the topic has been scarce until recently. The impressive work of Naser Dumairieh, *Sufis and Their Lodges in the Ottoman Hijāz*, sheds light on a previously understudied territory. The book contains three Arabic treatises, accompanied by a lengthy introduction concerning the Sufi presence in the Ottoman Hijaz and Ḥasan b. ‘Alī al-‘Uğaymī, the author of the treatises².

The prominent Hijazi Sufi and scholar Ḥasan b. ‘Alī al-‘Uğaymī (d. 1702) was the most important connecting ring and transmitter of Sufi orders in Hijaz in the 17 and 18th centuries. He was one of the most distinguished students of Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Quṣāṣī (d. 1661) alongside Mullā Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (d. 1690) and Muḥammad b. Rasūl al-Barzanjī (d. 1691). As the lecturer of the Grand Mosque of Medina, a prominent Sufi master, and author of a hundred books, al-‘Uğaymī attracted many students, among whom Ṣāh Walī Allāh Dihlawī (d. 1762) is notable.

The first treatise, titled *Ḥabāyā al-Zawāyā* (“Secrets of the Lodges”), is a list of 144 Sufi masters whom al-‘Uğaymī was studied or connected with, as well as a list of Sufi centers of Hijaz in his time, their founders, characteristics and the chains of transmissions of their *Shaykh*, which goes back to the founder of each order. Al-‘Uğaymī’s usage of *isnād* (addressing chain of transmitters) resembles the way that *ḥadīth* scholars connect themselves to the Prophet. *Secrets of the Lodges* is edited critically based on four manuscripts, Dumairieh indicated variant readings, as well as useful descriptions in footnotes. Adding titles to the text and numbering key figures and lodges presented a readable and easy-to-navigate text.

The second treatise, *Risālah fī ṭuruq al-ṣūfiyyah* (“Treatise on Sufi Orders”), presents an account of 40 active Sufi orders of al-‘Uğaymī’s time. Notably, he was not meant to record all of the Sufis and orders of his time, but the only ones whom he had a connection with or permission to: transmit *ḍikr* (*talqīn al-ḍikr*), open *ḍikr* sessions (*fath maḡālis al-ḍikr*), take the oath of allegiance (*‘ahd al-‘ahd wa al-bay‘ah*), affiliate or initiate others to the Sufi path (*intisāb ‘ilā ‘ahl Allāh*), giving *ḥirqah* to others (*ilbās al-ḥirqah*), and transmitting a treatise. A wide range of information concerning each Sufi order is addressed in the *Treatise on Sufi orders*, including their founder and prominent figures, sometimes the orders’ dress code, and what al-‘Uğaymī calls *mabnā* (“foundation”) which is the principal rituals of

² This work is not Naser Dumairieh’s only study of Hijazi Sufism. He has published three illustrious books and several articles concerning the history of Sufism in Hijaz: [Dumairieh, 2022^a; Dumairieh, 2022^b; al-Barzanji, 2021; al-Kūrānī, 2025; Dumairieh, 2021^a; Dumairieh, 2021^b; Dumairieh, 2021^c].

each order, that is usually a set of remembrances (*dīkr*) alongside with specific way of expressing it or even a contemplative way of sitting. Dumairieh edited *Treatise on Sufi orders* based on two manuscripts, both from Morocco. In addition, he compared the text with Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Sanūsī’s (d. 1493) *al-Salsabīl al-ma’īn fī al-ṭarā’iq al-arba’īn*, which is an abridgment of the al-‘Uḡaymī’s treatise.

The last treatise presented in this book is a brief autobiography of al-‘Uḡaymī, titled *Isbāl al-sitr al-ḡamīl ‘alā tarḡamat al-‘abd al-ḍalīl*, which is an account of al-‘Uḡaymī’s intellectual life, his teachers and Sufi masters.

Naser Dumairieh’s *Sufis and Their Lodges in the Ottoman Hījāz* is a perfect example of a well-edited and well-prepared critical edition. His illuminating introduction not only grounds a context for understanding the al-‘Uḡaymī’s treatises but also is a valuable and deep study of the Hijaz’s Sufi tradition in the pre-Wahhābi era.

Sufi *isnād* is a unique and often neglected source for historical studies concerning Sufi orders. Many of the Sufis mentioned in the chains of transmission are absent from other sources since they lacked any significant intellectual aspects or activities. Without considering this genre of Sufi literature, a noteworthy deal of the history of Sufi orders would be neglected. In the coming section, by bringing some examples from the book, I discuss how *Sufis and Their Lodges*, and many other books and treatises in the genre of Sufi *isnād*, could contribute to Sufi studies and how they could bring some understudied dimensions of the Islamic intellectual history into light.

Sufi Intuitions and the Global Approach in Sufi Studies

Although it could be elitist in some ways, the Sufi path is not individualist, in its modern sense, by any means. The Sufi path begins with recognizing *another* person as the source of authority, having a spiritual master is a part and parcel of the Sufi path, a master by whom the tradition is handed down to the disciples [Green, 2012, 5]. This master-disciple relation forms a community of Sufis, communities in which the Sufi path sustains and transfers. So, the tradition of the Sufi path is handed over in the context of master-disciple relations, which themselves form different orders, and they are closely associated with Sufi lodges, as the physical context of the Sufi path. These authority-building Sufi lodges usually sustain the Sufi path by providing them with material resources, they are a place for gathering, performing rituals, and remembrancers, that let the Sufi path be handed down and sustained [Ibid., 7]. As Nile Green puts it: “It is institutions that select, preserve, and propagate the textual and spoken discourses that persuade a given social group to follow a particular set of beliefs and behaviors” [Green, 2020, 4].

It’s important to keep in mind that these Sufi institutions, and individuals living in them and forming their identity through them, are not in the isolation from other institutions and communities, and they are constructed in a dynamic process

of deconstructing different national, regional, and ethnic identities and reconstructing them into new collective identities.

To understand the social actuality of Sufism it is not enough to merely investigate the belief system of Sufis and their contemplative methods, but to examine the organizations that define, authorize, and expound Sufism, to examine the social mechanisms that bring to gather different geographical parts and Sufi traditions to gather [Green, 2020, 4].

Due to the dynamic nature of these institutions and social constructions, their soft aspects (i.e. their teachings, texts, contemplative methods, and the masters themselves) could easily move through geographical regions. *Sufis and Their Lodges* provide us with a valuable tool to track down these trans-border transitions and study Sufi lodges, to understand the dynamic identity of Sufi orders.

These trans-border transitions of Sufi paths and orders could be seen as “longue durée processes through which a tradition was gradually created, expanded, reconfigured” [Green, 2012, 13]. Notably, this notion refers to a slow process of history, during which a phenomenon remains stable and changes slowly over centuries and regions [Papas, 2020, 12].

Take the *Ḥātimiyyah* order, for instance, the order attributed to Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 1240). By several mediators al-‘Uḡaymī’s chain of transmission in *Ḥātimiyyah* order reaches Šams Maḡribī (d. 1408) and from him, with some mediators, to Šadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 1274) and Ibn ‘Arabī himself [al-‘Ujaymī, 2023, 420]. Al-‘Uḡaymī was living in Hijaz, Maḡribī in Tabriz, Qūnawī mostly in Konya, Ibn Arabi in Al-Andalus and later in Syria. It’s interesting that a single order handed over diverse geographical parts of the Islamic world and yet sustained its identity. The transitions of each order, and its presence in different provinces, could be tracked using its chains of transmission.

How Sufis See “Other” Sufis?

Sufis and Their Lodges also reflect the reception of al-‘Uḡaymī of different Sufi orders and Sufis of other parts of the Islamic world. In the *Treatise on Sufi orders*, al-‘Uḡaymī concludes the chapter on the *Mawlawī* order with these words: “Most of those affiliated with this order, of the people of *Rūm*, have been overcome by malice and misbeliefs” [Ibid., 401].

Avoiding the dangers of a naïve generalization, I do not wish to claim that the declaration of al-‘Uḡaymī sums up the general attitude of Hijazi Sufis towards the followers of the *Mawlawī* order, but these brief personal notes distributed all around the book are a valuable source to study the encounters of different orders and Sufis, to examine how they define their identity as distinct Sufi orders.

Not all of these expressions are always as straightforward as this, they are even sometimes in a sarcastic way or more subtle than al-‘Uḡaymī’s declaration. Before

wrapping up and moving forward, I like to bring two more expressions from other sources into consideration; two similar expressions, from two prominent Sufi masters, concerning Ibn ‘Arabī.

Sa‘d al-Dīn Ḥamawī (d. 1252), a prominent *Kubrawī* Sufi from the northeast of Iran, was a disciple of Naḡm al-Dīn Kubrā (d. 1221) and Šihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 1234). As a lifelong traveler, he encountered and was in connection with many prominent figures; among those Ibn ‘Arabī is noteworthy. He reflects on his encounter with him as such: “Ibn ‘Arabī is an ocean without shore, but the light of Muḥammad’s obedience in [Šihāb al-Dīn] al-Suhrawardī is something else” [Ġiyāṭ al-Dīn Ḥamawī, 2011, 27].

Šams Tabrīzī (d. 1248), in his *Discourses*, puts forward a very similar statement: “Shaykh Muḥammad was quite like-minded, a great companion, and a remarkable man, but he was not in the obedience [of prophet Muḥammad]” [Tabrīzī, 2012, 299].

I wish not to delve into the meaning of prophet’s obedience, which seemingly Ibn ‘Arabī lacked, from the perspective of these two famous Sufi masters; my objection here is merely bringing these expressions into consideration to see them not just as sheerly personal preferences, but as devices and practices which their intentionality should be understood. These expressions could be contextualized in terms of how Sufis see orthodoxy in the Sufi path; but beyond the dichotomy of orthodoxy and heterodoxy I wish to understand them as indications of the diverse spiritual status of Sufis. In other words, I consider different attitudes of Sufis towards *taṣawwuf* (“the path(s) of becoming Sufi”). The juxtaposition of these criticisms with recognizing the prominent status of Ibn ‘Arabī is quite interesting and worth further consideration, which is far beyond the scope of this review.

Sufi Path(s)

Another interesting phenomenon that represented itself in this book is the openness of the Sufi path, at least some Sufis and al-‘Uḡaymī among them, toward “others.” While recognizing the distinct identity of each Sufi order, al-‘Uḡaymī does not hesitate to assimilate them all into his own identity and attribute himself to many Sufi orders³. But what does it mean to be attributed to many Sufi orders, since one, due to the boundaries of human capabilities, cannot practice even a handful of them simultaneously. It seems that such attributions are an act of calming spiritual authority, since every bond and relation to a Sufi order is a path or bond to prophet Muḥammad himself; so the more orders one is attributed to, the more he or she is authorized

³ The phenomenon of mixed spiritual identity is not quite rare in Sufism. Sufis, especially those who live in areas that are exposed to other orders, usually tend to seek grace (*baraka*) from other Sufi masters, which is sometimes in the form of receiving a cloak from another master, which is called *hirqat al-tabarruk* (“cloak of blessing”).

as a Sufi master. Just as among *ḥadīṭ* scholars, the more paths they have, the more they are authorized and recognized as authentic scholars. The number of orders that al-‘Uḡaymī mentions and attributes himself to, is worth considering as well. The number forty (*‘arba ‘īn*) is a highly symbolic number in Islamic culture, it usually indicates the multiplicity of something, and in the Sufi path it’s the duration of a full-time spiritual retreat⁴.

Sufi Methods of Contemplation

The diversity that embedded deeply in the Sufi path is well-represented in *Sufis and Their Lodges*. These different Sufi orders, although all of them are the Sufi path(s), have their distinct contemplative methods and even sometimes their dress codes. For instance, al-‘Uḡaymī mentions that *Ḥalwati* Sufis wear black clothes while *Burhāni* Sufis wear green [al-‘Uḡaymī, 2023, 394, 403]. This book is a rich source for comparative studies of Sufi contemplative methods and even the socio-cultural customs that distinguish their collective identity and their order from others.

To sum things up, al-‘Uḡaymī’s treatises not only shed light on the pre-Wahhābi intellectual history of Hijaz, but it’s also a rich source for studying Sufi institutions, Sufi orders’ trans-borders transmission, Sufi’s reception of the Sufi path, Sufi contemplative methods, etc. Although their importance in Sufi studies could not be exaggerated, most Sufi *isnāds* are still in the form of manuscripts and still wait to be edited and brought to academic attention.

References

- Al-Barzanḡī, Muḥammad b. Rasūl. *Al-Ġāḍib al-ḡaybī ‘ilā al-ḡānib al-ḡarbī fī ḥall muškilat al-ṣayḥ Muḥī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī* [Mysterious Guide to the Western Side: Solving the Problem of Shaykh Muḥī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī]. Ed. by Naser Dumairieh. Beirut: Dar al-Madar al-Islami, 2021, 673 pp. (In Arabic)
- Dumairieh, N. *Intellectual Life in the Hijaz before Wahhabism: Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī’s Theology of Sufism*. Leiden: Brill, 2022, 372 pp.
- Dumairieh, N. “Revising the Assumption that Ḥadīṭ Studies Flourished in the 11th/17th-Century Ḥiḡāz: Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī’s (d. 1101/1690) Contribution”. In: *Arabica*, 2021, No. 68, pp. 1–35.
- Dumairieh, N. “Some Aspects of the Hijaz’s Contribution to the Defense of Ibn ‘Arabī and His Thought”. In: *Intellectual Connections between Jazirat al-‘Arab and Jazirat al-Andalus*. Durham: The International Association for the Study of Arabia, 2021, pp. 85–97.

⁴ Derived from Quran 7:142: “And We appointed for Moses thirty nights, and We completed them with ten [more]; thus was completed the appointed term of his Lord: forty nights” [Nasr, 2017].

- Dumairieh, N. "Al-Qushāshī and al-Kūrānī on the Unity of God's Attributes (*waḥdat al-ṣifāt*)". In: *Islamic Thought through the Art of Translation: Texts and Studies in Honor of William C. Chittick and Sachiko Murata*. Ed. Mohammed Rustom. Leiden: Brill, 2022, pp. 202–224.
- Ġiyāṭ al-Dīn Ḥamawī, 'Abū al-Futūḥ. *Murād al-Murīdīn* [The Desire of the Seekers]. Tehran: The Institute of Islamic Studies University of Tehran; McGill University, 2011, 248 pp. (In Arabic)
- Green, N. *Global Islam: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020, 180 pp.
- Green, N. *Sufism: A Global History*. New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, 286 pp.
- Ibn 'Arabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn. *Al-Fūtūḥāt al-Makkīyah* [The Meccan Revelations]. In 9 vols. Beirut: Dār 'Ilm al-Turāṭ al-'Arabī, n.d.
- Al-Kūrānī, Mullā Ibrāhīm. *Al-'Ayn wa-l-'Aṭar fī 'Aqā'id 'Ahl al-'Aṭar* [The Eye and the Trace: on Traditionalists' Creeds]. Damascus: Dār al-Ṣayḥ al-Akbar, 2025, 320 pp.
- Nasr, S.H. *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*. New York: Harper-Collins, 2017, pp. 2048.
- Papas, A. *Sufi Institutions*. Leiden: Brill, 2020, 458 pp.
- Tabrīzī, Šams. *Maqalāt* [Discourses]. Tehran: Ḥārazmī, 2012, 1023 pp. (In Persian)
- Al-'Ujaymī, Ḥasan b. 'Alī. *Sufis and Their Lodges in the Ottoman Ḥijāz (Khabāyā al-zawāyā "Secrets of the Lodges" & Risāla fī ṭuruq al-šūfiyya "Treatise on Sufi Orders")*. Ed. by Naser Dumairieh. Leiden: Brill, 2023. 521 pp.