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A Review of International Studies on the Kubrawiyya Order and the Intellectual Legacy of Its Scholars

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Abstract: This article examines international scholarship on the Kubrawiyya order and the intellectual legacy of its founder, Najm al-Dīn Kubrā. It analyzes the approaches adopted by foreign researchers in studying the historical development, doctrinal foundations, and spiritual significance of the Kubrawiyya order. Particular attention is paid to the use of primary historical sources, the dissemination of the order across different regions of the Islamic world, and the emergence of its major branches. The study also evaluates the contribution of international scholarship to the reconstruction of the history of the Kubrawiyya order and demonstrates its importance for contemporary research on the history of Sufism in Central Asia. The findings indicate that foreign academic studies have significantly enriched the understanding of the Kubrawiyya tradition and continue to serve as an important source for the study of Central Asian Islamic intellectual heritage.

Keywords: Kubrawiyya, Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, Sufism, Central Asia, Islamic studies, Oriental studies, intellectual heritage, Sufi orders, historical sources, foreign scholarship.

By the twentieth century, Sufism, which had made a significant contribution to the development of the Islamic world and global philosophical thought, particularly through its rich and diverse intellectual traditions, had attracted the growing attention of both Eastern and Western scholars specializing in Oriental and Islamic studies.[1] Numerous international researchers have conducted studies on the Sufi orders of Central Asia, their prominent representatives, and their intellectual heritage.[2] In particular, Western Orientalists have produced substantial scholarship on the Sufi traditions of Central Asia. Among the most distinguished scholars in this field are the British orientalists Reynold A. Nicholson[3] and Arthur J. Arberry[4], the French scholar Louis Massignon[5], the German orientalist Theodor Nöldeke[6], the German scholar Annemarie Schimmel[7], as well as M. T. Stepanyants, V. Zhukovsky, W. Ivanow, and R. A. Nicholson, whose rigorous studies have made an important contribution to a deeper understanding of Sufism.

In the East, Sufism has been studied extensively by scholars such as Abdolhossein Zarrinkoub[8], Inayat Khan, Javad Nurbakhsh, Idries Shah, R. N. Nasirov, Sajjadi Sa'id Ja'far, Selçuk Eraydın, Ahmad al-Naqshbandi al-Khalidi, the Japanese scholar Toshihiko Izutsu, and

[1] Abdurasulov Sh. Research on Central Asian Sufi Scholars in the Turkish Academic Sphere // XXI asr: fan va ta'lim masalalari. – 2026. – №1. – B. 45–54. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.19407511.
[2] Abdurasulov Sh. Markaziy Osiyo tasavvuf allomalari ilmiy merosi va ular haqidagi manbalar tahlili // *Qo'qon DPI. Ilmiy xabarlar*. – 2025. – T. 11. – B. 880–891.
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nuqtai nazaridan o'rganish sohasidagi jahon ilm-fanining so'nggi yutuqlarini o'zida aks ettirgan.

many others. Their works examine the essential nature of Sufism while also paying particular attention to the Sufi orders that developed in Central Asia.[9]

Najm al-Din Kubra and the Kubrawiyya order occupy a central place in the studies of a number of foreign scholars. In particular, the Kubrawiyya order has been examined in the works of John Spencer Trimingham[10], Fritz Meier[11], Annemarie Schimmel[12], Devin DeWeese[13], Terry Zarcone[14], and other researchers, who have analyzed its historical development, doctrinal foundations, and intellectual significance.

In his study The Sufi Orders in Islam, J. Spencer Trimingham devotes considerable attention to the Kubrawiyya order alongside other major Sufi brotherhoods. He examines the origin, organizational structure, and distinctive characteristics of the order, seeking to explain its historical development and doctrinal features. According to Trimingham, the representatives of the Kubrawiyya order became renowned for preserving an authentic silsila (spiritual chain of transmission) and a well-established tradition of dhikr (remembrance of God). He also presents the spiritual genealogy (silsila) of the Kubrawiyya order and introduces its principal successors and disciples.[77] He notes, however, that the order gradually declined and, as an organized Sufi brotherhood, did not survive into the modern period. Trimingham further states that Najm al-Din Kubra received part of his education in Egypt, where he studied under the Persian Sufi master Ruzbihan al-Wazzan al-Misri as well as Abu al-Najib al-Suhrawardi. Nevertheless, he identifies Isma'il al-Qasri, who invested him with the symbolic Sufi cloak (khirqa), as Kubra's principal spiritual master.[15] After returning to Khwarazm, Najm al-Din Kubra established a khanaqah (Sufi lodge) together with Majd al-Din Baghdadi, who later became the spiritual guide (pir) of the celebrated Persian mystic and poet Farid al-Din Attar.

Trimingham also emphasizes that the majority of Najm al-Din Kubra's works were composed in Arabic.[16] Historical sources indicate that Najm al-Din Kubra actively participated in the defense of Khwarazm during the Mongol invasion and fought courageously alongside his compatriots in an effort to protect his homeland. Trimingham highlights this episode as evidence of Kubra's patriotism and commitment to his people. Although numerous miraculous accounts (karamat) have been attributed to Najm al-Din Kubra in the hagiographical tradition, Trimingham does not discuss them in his study. Today, Kubra's mausoleum in Urgench remains an important pilgrimage site and continues to attract visitors from across the region.

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[9] Abdurasulov S. Study Of The Naqshbandiyya Order And The Heritage Of Its Scholars Abroad //Oriental renaissance: Innovative, educational, natural and social sciences. – 2026. – Т. 6. – №. 3. – С. 27-37.

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Восточной литературы, 1989. – 328 с. Сс.54-55.

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Восточной литературы, 1989. – 328 с. Сс. 58-60.

J. Spencer Trimingham also describes several Sufi orders that emerged from the Kubrawiyya tradition. According to his account, the principal branches derived from the Kubrawiyya order include the following:

- The Firdawsiyya Order originated through Sayf al-Din Bukhari, a disciple of Najm al-Din Kubra, and is particularly associated with one of his prominent successors, Badr al-Din Firdawsi, after whom the order was named. The Firdawsiyya gained widespread influence in the Delhi and Bihar regions of India.
- The Nuriyya Order was founded by Nur al-Din Abd al-Rahman Isfarayini and represents the Baghdad branch of the Kubrawiyya tradition.
- The Rukniyya Order developed as the Khurasanian branch of the Kubrawiyya order. It was named after its founder, Rukn al-Din ibn Abi al-Karim Ahmad Ala al-Dawla Simnani, who was widely revered in the Sufi tradition of Khurasan as an eminent mystic and saint.
- The Hamadaniyya Order, a branch that emerged from the Rukniyya tradition, became firmly established in the Kashmir region of India. It is associated with Sayyid Ali Shihab al-Din Hamadani, whose efforts played a decisive role in the dissemination of Islam in the Indian subcontinent through Sufi missionary activity.
- The Ightishashiyya Order was founded by Ishaq Khuttalani (d. 1423) and became influential in the Khurasan region.
- The Nurbakhshiyya Order is associated with Muhammad ibn Abdullah Nurbakhsh, a disciple of Ishaq Khuttalani. This order represents one of the most significant later branches of the Kubrawiyya tradition.
- The Niʿmatullāhiyya order was founded by Sayyid Niʿmatullāh Walī and is widely practiced in Iran. Today, the order also maintains numerous khānqāhs (Sufi lodges) in Western countries. Its current leader is Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh.[17]

Although the Kubrawiyya order has developed into several branches, they all share the same fundamental objectives and spiritual principles. The branches mentioned above are all based on the doctrines and theoretical framework established by Shaykh Najm al-Dīn Kubrā.[18]

The Kubrawiyya order has also received considerable scholarly attention in the works of the German Orientalist and Islamic studies scholar Annemarie Schimmel.[19] While studying at the University of Berlin, Schimmel was profoundly influenced by her mentor, Hans Heinrich Schaeder,

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[17] Тримингэм Дж. Суфийские ордены в исламе / Пер. с англ. А.А. Ставиской; под ред. О.А. Акимушкина. – Москва: Наука. Главная
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[18] Abdurasulov S., Doniyorov A. Markaziy Osiyo tasavvuf tarixining nemis olimi Yurgen Paul tomonidan tadqiqi: Naqshbandiyya misolida // XXI asr: Fan va ta'lim masalalari (XXI asr: Fan va ta'lim masalalari). – 2025. – T. 3. – B. 307-321.

[19] Annemarie Schimmel was a German Orientalist and scholar whose research focused extensively on Islam, particularly Sufism. She was born on 7 April 1922 in Erfurt, Germany. In 1939, at the age of seventeen, she began her studies at the University of Berlin during the period of Nazi rule in Europe. In November 1941, she was awarded a doctoral degree at the age of nineteen for her dissertation entitled *Die Stellung des Kalifen und der Qadis im spätmittelalterlichen Ägypten* (*The Position of the Caliph and the Qadis in Late Medieval Egypt*). In 1946, at the age of twenty-three, Schimmel delivered her habilitation lecture on the leading figures of Islamic mysticism, which subsequently led to her appointment as Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Marburg. In 1954, she earned a second doctorate in the History of Religions from the University of Marburg with a dissertation on mystical love in Islam. A major turning point in Schimmel's academic career came in 1954 when she was appointed Professor of the History of Religions at Ankara University. She was the first woman and the first non-Muslim to teach theology at the university. In 1967, she joined Harvard University as a lecturer in Indo-Muslim culture and was promoted to the rank of full professor in 1970. The following twenty-five years of her academic career were spent at Harvard University. During this period, she also served as an honorary professor at the University of Bonn. In the final years of her life, Schimmel resided in Bonn, where she devoted herself primarily to writing and delivering lectures. Translating Islamic poetry was among her greatest intellectual passions. She passed away on 26 January 2003.

who inspired her to study one of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's major works, the Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīzī. It was during this period that she developed a lasting interest in Islamic studies.[20]

A major turning point in Schimmel's academic career came in 1954, when she was appointed Professor of the History of Religions at Ankara University. During her five years in the Turkish capital, she taught in Turkish and became closely acquainted with the country's culture and Sufi traditions. She was the first woman and the first non-Muslim to teach theology at Ankara University. This experience further deepened her interest in the works of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. In 1967, Schimmel joined Harvard University as a lecturer in Indo-Muslim culture, and in 1970 she was promoted to the rank of full professor. The following twenty-five years of her academic career were spent at Harvard University. Almost every autumn, she traveled to Pakistan, where she earned widespread respect and recognition. Her extensive travels throughout the Muslim world had a profound influence on her subsequent scholarship.

Schimmel's lectures on Sufism consistently attracted large audiences. One of these lecture series later became her best-known work, Mystical Dimensions of Islam.[21] After retiring from Harvard University in 1992, she settled in Bonn, where the final years of her life were devoted primarily to writing and delivering lectures. Translating Islamic poetry was among her greatest intellectual passions. She published more than one hundred books in English and German, most of which were intended for a broad readership. Consequently, her writings combine rigorous scholarship with a distinctive literary style.

Annemarie Schimmel's Mystical Dimensions of Islam was published in 1975. The first part of the book provides a detailed discussion of the essential nature of Sufism and its historical origins. Particular attention is devoted to the Islamic concept of the Perfect Human (al-insān al-kāmil). Schimmel also examines the similarities and differences between Islamic mysticism and earlier religious traditions and philosophical teachings, seeking to demonstrate how these traditions influenced the development of Islamic Sufi orders through a comparative approach. The second part of the book is devoted to the major Sufi orders that spread throughout the Islamic world. Among these, the Sufi orders that originated in Central Asia receive special attention. In particular, the book contains valuable information on the Kubrawiyya order.[22] According to Schimmel's Mystical Dimensions of Islam, Najm al-Dīn Kubrā's Arabic Qurʾānic commentary, comprising nine volumes, was recorded by his disciple Najm al-Dīn Rāzī and later continued by another prominent member of the order, ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla al-Simnānī.[83] Schimmel also discusses the spread of the Kubrawiyya order to Anatolia and the Indian subcontinent. She notes that Najm al-Dīn Rāzī left Khwarazm before the Mongol invasion and introduced the order to Anatolia. By the second half of the fourteenth century, the Kubrawiyya had become one of the most influential spiritual traditions in Kashmir. According to historical accounts, Sayyid ʿAlī Hamadānī migrated to India together with seven hundred followers, playing a decisive role in the dissemination of the order there.[84]

In 1995, Schimmel published My Soul Is a Woman (Uzbek: Jonon mening jonimda). In this work, she examines the position of women in the Islamic world and explores how female figures are portrayed in the writings of Sufi scholars. The book has also been translated into Uzbek.

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[20] Abdurasulov Sh. Annemarie Schimmel asarlarida Markaziy Osiyo tasavvuf allomalari va ularning ilmiy merosi tahlili // *Historical Realities and Philosophical Ideals: Dialogues Across Disciplines*: xalqaro ilmiy-amaliy konferensiya materiallari. – Toshkent, 2025. – № 3. – B. 399–410.

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[22] Schimmel, Annemarie. Mystical dimensions of Islam. The Universit y of North Carolina Press Chapel Hill. 1975. – 512 p. Pp. 254-256

Najm al-Dīn Kubrā's principal work, Fawāʾiḥ al-Jamāl wa Fawātiḥ al-Jalāl (The Fragrances of Beauty and the Openings of Majesty), was comprehensively analyzed by the Swiss scholar Fritz Meier.[23] In his study, Meier treated this work as an independent primary source and demonstrated its scholarly significance to the Western academic world.[24]

Professor Devin DeWeese, currently Professor of Islamic and Central Eurasian Studies at Indiana University Bloomington, devotes considerable attention in his scholarship to Najm al-Dīn Kubrā and the Kubrawiyya order. He received his Ph.D. from Indiana University in 1985 and has since conducted extensive research on Islam in Central Asia, with particular emphasis on Sufism and its political and social dimensions. His sustained engagement with primary sources on the history of Islam in Central Asia, together with his critical analysis of these materials, has enabled him to gain a deeper understanding of the intellectual and historical motivations of their authors.[25]

Among DeWeese's numerous publications, the volume Studies on Sufism in Central Asia[26] is of particular relevance to the present study. This collection brings together twelve scholarly articles published between 1988 and 2005, all devoted to various aspects of the history of Sufism in Central Asia. Four of these studies (Chapters I, II, V, and XI) are dedicated entirely to the Kubrawiyya order. These studies provide detailed analyses of significant primary sources relating to the history of the Kubrawiyya order. Arranged in chronological order, the volume examines the development of Sufi traditions from the thirteenth through the seventeenth centuries. It represents the culmination of nearly two decades of DeWeese's research conducted between 1988 and 2005 and stands as the result of many years of sustained scholarly work.

DeWeese's articles Sayyid ʿAlī Hamadānī and the Kubrawī Hagiographical Tradition[88] and The Eclipse of the Kubrawiyah in Central Asia[27] are devoted specifically to the Kubrawiyya order. In Sayyid ʿAlī Hamadānī and the Kubrawī Hagiographical Tradition,[90] DeWeese offers a comprehensive examination of the lives and scholarly activities of two prominent Sufi masters, Sayyid ʿAlī Hamadānī and Najm al-Dīn Kubrā. His comparative analysis provides valuable insights into their respective intellectual and spiritual contributions. It should be noted that this study is based primarily on original historical sources.

In The Eclipse of the Kubrawiyah in Central Asia, DeWeese focuses exclusively on the Kubrawiyya order. In addition to examining the life of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, he pays particular attention to the activities of his disciples and successors. The study further explores the position of the Kubrawiyya order in the religious and social life of the peoples of Central Asia in subsequent centuries, with special emphasis on its historical development and transformation.

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