

16.00-16.30

**Thierry Zarcone** (CNRS, Paris), *A major Sufi figure of Yarkand (Xinjiang) in the twentieth century: 'Ubaydullah Khān (d. 1993) and the Naqshbandiyya lineage*

This presentation wants to explore the activities and the writings of 'Ubaydullah Khān (d. 1993), one of the major Sufi writers of Xinjiang in the twentieth century. 'Ubaydullah Khān, the member of a Sufi dynasty from Andijan in the Ferghana Valley (Western Turkestan) was born in Yarkand, a city in the south of Xinjiang where his father decided to settle in the years 1920s fleeing the Soviet invasion of his country. A descendant of Mawlānā Majdhūb 'Abd al-'Azīz Namanganī (d. 1856-57), a great representative of Naqshbandiyya in the Ferghana valley in nineteenth century, 'Ubaydullah Khān directed a Naqshbandī khānaqāh which was, after his death under the direction of his son, until 2009 one of the four khānaqāhs in Yarkand officially authorized to work by the government of Xinjiang. His khānaqāh gained followers as far as the neighbouring cities of Kashgar and Khotan and probably elsewhere in Xinjiang. Besides, 'Ubaydullah Khān was a prominent expert on traditional Uyghur medicine, a Sufi poet and the author of two Sufi writings, still unpublished and kept in the archives of his family. These writings deal with the naqshbandī ethic (*ādāb*) and doctrine, especially on the dhikr (both *khafī*, silent, and *jahrī*, vocal), the rituals of dance (*samā'*) and of initiation (*qol berīsh*, giving the hand) and on the place of women in Sufism. 'Ubaydullah Khān's books give also some insight about the history of the Naqshbandiyya in the south of Xinjiang in twentieth century and of its relations with other local Sufi lineages, and on Sufi poetry particularly when it is sung during the *dhikr*.

16.30-17.00

**Demetrio Giordani** (Università di Modena e Reggio Emilia), *Portrait of Mirzā Mazhar Jān-i Jānān in the Maqāmāt-i Mazhariya*

Shamsuddīn Habībullāh Mīrzā Mazhar Jān-i Jānān (1699-1781) was one of the leading figures in the cultural and spiritual life of Delhi during a period of calamity and turmoil. He was a refined poet, a learned and profound exegete, an ascetic and a teacher. He was born into a noble family, and from an early age showed signs of a deep love nature, so much so that he himself acknowledged that 'the restlessness of passion and love is the leaven of my nature'. He was a disciple of the most important masters of the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya of Delhi, until he became the spiritual heir of the Mujaddid-i Alf-i Thānī, ("The Renewer of the second millennium of Islām"), Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī (d.1624). It is almost inevitable, while leafing through the naqshbandī writings concerning the methodical aspects of the sufi path, to find news referring to Mīrzā Mazhar. His life, that of his teachers, his sentences and his letters have been handed down in the *Maqāmāt-i Mazhariya*, the biography written by Shah Gulām 'Alī, his main disciple and spiritual heir.

18.00-19.00

**Concert of Sufi and Qalandari Music**

**I Part Persian Spiritual Tunes**

**Leyli Atashkar**, *setār* (long necked lute) with *daf* (frame drum)

**II part Baluchi Healing and Devotional Tunes**

**Jean During**, *sorud* (fiddle), Leyli Atashkar, *tanburag* (long necked lute)

image: Group of qalandār dervishes in Samarkand. © Library of Congress, Washington, Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorskii Collection.



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# Dervishes along the Silk Roads between Past and Present

by **Thomas Dähnhardt**,  
**Giovanni De Zorzi**

Ca' Foscari University of Venice

**March 25th 2022**

Auditorium Santa Margherita

9.30-17.00 **Conference**

18.00 **Concert of Sufi and Qalandari Music**

Conference and concert

## **Dervishes along the Silk Roads between Past and Present**

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9.30-10.00

### **Institutional Greetings**

**Luca Maria Olivieri** (Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Marco Polo Centre)

10.00-10.30

**Stefano Pellò** (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), **The Lord of Kabul: Wandering Masters in Mirza 'Abd al-Qadir Bedil's Chahar 'unsur**

My paper will focus on the various images of Sufi masters, wandering dervishes and renunciates described in Mirza 'Abd al-Qadir Bedil's autobiography, completed in Delhi in 1704. Born in Patna (then 'Azimabad) in 1644, Bedil became one of the most authoritative representatives of Persian poetry and philosophical Sufism in late 17th- and early 18th-century Delhi, where he died in 1720. Along with his several poetic works, all marked by a strong philosophical approach towards the unfolding of reality (*haqiqat*; *wujud*) and explored through the method of *tahqiq* (verification), Bedil's autobiography - a deconstruction of the self significantly entitled *Chahar 'unsur* "The Four Elements" - is a precious document to explore and reconstruct the intellectual and devotional interaction between the literate world of Mughal writers and philosophers and the non-courtly environment of the wandering ascetics of North India, at the textual level. We will, consequently, analyze the textualization of masters and dervishes in this text, looking at it as a self-*tazkira* including, as well, a scattered *tazkira* of several *awliyas*. We will do so by looking at existing models, creative reproductions, theoretical novelties and contextual conceptualizations, aiming at clarifying and interpreting the role of the wandering master and ascetic in Bedil's self-understanding; at the same time, we will throw new light to some specific biographical paradigms and *topoi*, with a special attention to the dynamics of interactions within and around the vast territories of South and Central Asia.

10.30-11.00

**Alexandre Papas** (CNRS, Paris), **Ecstatic Mystics (mecâzib) in Ottoman Istanbul**

Based on several Ottoman biographical collections yet only partially explored by historians, this paper describes in detail the everyday life, the physical appearance and the antinomian practices of ecstatic mystics (*mecâzib*, pl. of *meczûb*). Many of them lived in the capital city of Istanbul, which appeared as a shelter for marginal Sufis at this time. This does not mean that they opposed more institutionalized forms of Sufism, and vice versa. Despite their strange habits, *mecâzib* were actually tolerated in the multifaceted environment of cosmopolitan Istanbul, and even considered as holy men, especially within the Halvetiyye Sufi order. Sources such as Nazmî Efendî's (d. 1701) *Hediyetü'l-ihvân* and Enfi Hasan's (d. 1724 or 29) *Tezkiretû'l-müteah-hirîn* help to present an alternative picture of both Ottoman Sufism and society.

11.00-11.30

**Jean During** (CNRS, Paris), **Khalife, saints and shrine in the baluch guâti-damali healing rituals**

The word *dervish* has been used in various ways and contexts as a way to describe different kinds of individuals whose common characteristic is that of nourishing a relation with the plane of super-sensual existence and adopting a behaviour that often departs from the prevailing social norms of the surrounding society. More precise meanings are conveyed by terms such as *malang*, *qalandar*, *faqir*, *sâheb* and *mâled* that are currently used in Iran or Pakistani Baluchistan. This paper deals with a peculiar type of *dervish*, referred to as *khalife*, who play an important part in the rituals of the Makran region, in Baluchistan. The rituals they perform, appointed by *guâti-damali* but quite different from the *dhamal* performed in proximity of sacred sites, are aimed at alle-

viating physical and/or mental maladies attributed to the presence of invisible entities, such as winds (*guat*), fairies (*pari*) and jinn. Although the *khalife* claim to receive part of their spiritual power through the intercession of a particular saint, they never claim regular affiliation to any of the institutionalized Sufi orders. It is therefore important to understand the role and identity of those individuals who, in a fashion apparently similar to the *guâti-damali* and the *dhamal*, employ melodies in their performances in a way that identifies these rituals in the full sense of the term with the practice of *samâ'*.

11.30-12.00

**Thomas Dähnhardt** (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), **The Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya Mazhariyya and its ramifications between Delhi and the Afghan border: the case of the Quetta khanaqah**

My contribution to this event wants to outline the importance re-vested by the Naqshbandi *khanaqah* in the old city of Delhi (former Shahjahanabad) during the past two centuries up to the present day, and its prolongation into a territory that is now in Pakistan, not far from the border with Afghanistan. It intends to highlight the connection between the reminiscence of the Mughal heritage of the *silsila* located at the very heart of the old capital and the spiritual outpost at the periphery that combines ancestral identity and antique memories of the order in the Pashtun heartland and the modern reality of the new nation state of Pakistan.

12.30-14.30 **Lunch**

14.30-15.00

**Jürgen Wasim Frembgen** (Ludwig-Maximilians Universität München), **From Trance Dancer to Saint: A Picture of Baba Firuz Sain's Life in Lahore**

In his youth Fīrūz Jān (lit. 'turquoise darling')

became a trance dancer at Sufi shrines in Lahore, for decades the most accomplished one in town. He was a master of *dhamāl*, the ritual dance which expresses the spiritual state of trance (*hāl*), commonly performed at saints' shrines of the Qalandar type. Over the years this experienced habitual dancer turned into a *faqīr*, respectfully called Bābā Firuz Sain and finally into what could be called a 'small' saint. The charismatic, saint-like Pathan with long hair passed away in 2015; he is now depicted on Sufi posters alongside the mausoleum of his spiritual guide. The paper tries to portray the *faqīr* on his way to sainthood, taking a look at his life in the company of other dervishes and the ethnographic context of his practiced everyday spirituality in the urban slum of Kot Lakhpat in Lahore. It shows how charisma is constructed in contemporary Pakistani Sufi Islam.

15.00-15.30

**Giovanni De Zorzi** (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), **Meetings with naqsbandī jāhrī dervishes in the Fergana valley (Uzbekistan)**

The paper takes into exam a school of dervishes called *naqsbandī jāhrī* the author met in the Fergana valley (Uzbekistan), who practiced both the *dhikr khāfī* ("silent, inner") and the *dhikr jāhrī* ("loud, manifest"). In Central Asia the way of performing the *dhikr* connotes and distinguishes two schools, called *khāfīyya* and *jāhrīyya*, each of which include, in addition to their specific *dhikr*, a series of practices that are typical of the same school. This paper intends to isolate and describe such practices on the basis of information gathered during a typical ethno-musicological fieldwork. Moreover, after a brief presentation of some peculiar types of *dhikr*, transcribed and analyzed, focus will be on a ceremonial called *raqs-i samā'* (*raqs-u samo*, *jamlanish*) recorded in Andijan, in the private mansion of an old *sheykh*.