THE RISE AND ROLE OF TARIQA AMONG MUSLIMS IN SINGAPORE

– THE CASE OF THE NAQSHBANDI HAQQANI

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For Abah and Mak,
with love...
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SUMMARY

This thesis seeks to account for the revived interest in *tariqa* among Muslims in Singapore, through the case study of the Naqshbandi Haqqani. In doing so, it aims to situate the *tariqa* within a theoretical framework of social movement organizations (SMOs). Two factors which facilitate social movements, i.e. opportunity structures and framing processes, will be explored.

This thesis also aims to surface the agency of religious membership through uncovering the discretionary influences to one’s voluntary membership to a religious association. These concerns are often ‘rational’ in nature such as the use of language and new media. They also function as sites of resistance against the boundedness of the ethno-religious identity of the Malay/Muslim Singaporean, while negotiating it against the fluidity of transnational religious experience.

This thesis ends with a discussion on the future of religious experience among Muslims in Singapore, pointing to the interplay of dynamics between globalization, opportunity structures, social class and the emerging transnational religious market. Religious experiences are not static and will continue to change in the future. The speed and rate of change is undoubtedly faster today than a century ago. This thesis is a modest attempt at exploring the patterns of change and proposes for a resolute intent towards the scientific study of Islam in Singapore.
CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

One of the earliest and most important expositions on Sufism was by Syed Ali bin Uthman Al-Hujweri, often known as Hujweri, in his famous tome, ‘Kashaf Al-Mahjub’ (Unveiling the Veiled). Hujweri was an 11th century Persian Sufi who helped to spread Islam through South Asia. He wrote of the different ways the term “Sufi” was understood but is most convinced that it refers to purity, from the word “safa”, which means purity of the heart (qalb). Hujweri remarked, “The good in anyone is called his safwat (own selection). So when those who make their manners and deeds desirable and attain salvation from their lower desires they become known as Sufis” (trans. Rabbani, 1997: 38).

Hujweri went on to suggest that there are three types of Sufis: Sufi, Mutasawwif and Mustasawwif. Sufis are “the united ones” as they have attained union (with Allah) and desire nothing else. The Mutasawwifs are “the principled ones” and they are constantly engaged in search of Truth, following rules and regulations through the tariqa, advancing in stages. The Mustasawwifs are the “the worthless ones” who don the garb and appearance of Sufis merely for the sake of wealth and position. Hujweri’s delineations provide a link between the Sufi and tariqa. He suggests that,

1 According to Hujweri, some say that Sufi refers to the first saff (row) meaning the highest category. Some say they refer to those of the Ashab-e-Safa (people of the verandah).
to be a Sufi one has to follow the *tariqa*, an institutionalized Sufi order, where the complex theosophy of Sufism is manifested through codified teachings and rituals. Therefore, while in the abstraction Sufism and *tariqa* are separate entities, they are often conflated when idea and practice is undifferentiated.

Sufism is an integral factor that contributed to the Islamization process so much so that in the 13th century, membership to *tariqa* is synonymous to the profession of faith in Islam. However, the influence and impact of Sufism is not unchallenged through time. Up to the late 19th to the 20th centuries, *tariqas* have suffered blows to their reputation. Among other concerns, *tariqas* were criticized for their disproportionate emphasis on the role of the *Sheikh*. This unwavering loyalty accorded to a figure of authority was deemed to discourage independent and rational thinking. On top of that, the loyalty conferred upon the *Sheikh* is feared to threaten the ‘Oneness of God’ (*Tauhidic*) precept in Islam. In fact, the catalogue of criticisms directed towards the *tariqa* does not end there; some have accused the age-old Islamic institution to be influenced by Christianity. Also, in the ongoing schismatic struggle among Muslims, Sunnis have accused *tariqas* to be of inherently Shi’ite origin and therefore deviationary.2

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Non-withstanding forceful criticisms, today the tide of tariqa has peaked yet again. Tariqas have become more visible as reflected through the increase of Sufi activities of various tenors. In Singapore, academicians, politicians, journalists and policy makers have taken on a renewed interest in Sufism as seen through the organization of academic conferences, public talks and increased coverage over the newspapers. In fact, the ‘Religious Rehabilitation Group’ (RRG) is a unique case in point showcasing the active role Sufism plays in rehabilitative efforts towards countering extremism in Singapore. Furthermore, there is a mushrooming of new tariqa orders some of which were never native to the region and are of recent import. The changing demographics of membership within tariqas is yet another indication. If previously tariqas used to be populated by the old and retired, today the young, educated and professional are at the helm of leadership. The youthful demographic of tariqas today would only sustain the age-old institution and maintain their relevance in time to come.

Therefore, the task of this exercise is to surface explanations for tariqas’ renewed vigour. Bearing in mind that the history of Sufism stretches as far back to the foundational years of Islam, the contextual recounting specific to this exercise will be directed to Sufism’s influence in Southeast Asia, concentrating on the Malay Archipelago, with a specific focus on Singapore. While the study of Sufism conventionally necessitates a keen explication of its theosophy, this subject matter does not suffice a passing commentary, as it is a complex area of knowledge that requires serious and
thorough expertise. As such, this exercise does not intend to enter into such a specialized discussion.

2. Literature Review

A survey of the literature written on Sufism in the Malay Archipelago can be categorized according to their foci, that is, theosophic, hagiographic, ethnographic. While many works abound, systematic studies on Sufism in the Malay world within a sociological frame is lacking.

2.1 Theosophic

As yet, the bulk of literature on Sufism focuses on theosophy. These involve in-depth expositions on the meaning of Sufism. Much of the debate centred on the controversy between the Immanence and the Transcendence of God. Many revolve around debating a famous Malay Saint, Hamzah Fansuri. Fansuri’s ideas were strongly opposed by Ar-Raniri who accused him of stressing God’s Immanence beyond His Transcendence. Azra (1989) comprehensively discussed the opposition to Sufism in the Malay-Indonesian region throughout the 17th and 18th century. He claimed that such discussions have been recorded from as early as the 16th century, when Islamic jurisprudential (fiqih) scholars came from Mecca. Proponents and opponents on either side hotly debated these ideas, well into the 21st century up till today. Scholars have recorded
these debates, for example Johns (1957) who discussed the written texts on Sufism found in the Malay Archipelago for the purpose of uncovering the pantheistic elements in them. He focused on the works of Hamzah Fansuri and concluded that there exists a pantheistic element to his theology. In reaction to Johns, many others have either written for or against him such as Al-Attas (1963, 1966, 1970), Taufik Aridzo (2000), Abdul Hadi (2001) and Braginsky (2003).

2.2 Hagiographic

Yet another common set of literature focuses on hagiographical accounts. A recent publication by Al-Firdaus Mosque (2008), a local mosque in Singapore, details the hagiography of Habib Noh Bin Muhamad Alhabsyi, a renowned Muslim Saint whose tomb is erected on a hill on Palmer Road. This modest publication is available in both English and Malay. The book begins with a discussion on Sainthood (wali) in Islam and goes on to identify Saints (wali) to the founders of major tariqas such as Saiyid Abdul Qadir Jailani, founder of the Qadiri tariqa.

The Ba’alwi Mosque in Singapore has also published a series of books on the ‘Alawi tariqa detailing the history of the mosque, its founder and the requirements of the tariqa. These accounts are a mix of hagiographical and

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3 This is contested by some who argue that Saiyid Abdul Qadir Jailani himself had nothing to do with the formation of the Qadiri tariqa. It was only after his death when his students decided to group to pass on the teachings of the late Saint.
historical narratives. It sheds light on the Muslim Saints here in the region. In addition, Abaza (1997) through her account of the Ba’alwi Mosque, traced and uncovered the Hadrahmi influence to the region. Through proposing an alternative framework to the study of Islam, Alatas (2005) presents a preliminary outline of the ‘Alawiyyah tariqa by situating the tariqa within the conceptual scheme of zahir and batin.

The Ahmadiyah tariqa is the most documented tariqa in the region through works by Hamdan Hassan (1990), Zarrina Sa’ari (1993) and Pauzi Haji Awang (2001). The Naqshbandiyya tariqa is also widely written on, for example, by Mohd Rushdi Yusof (2004). While these books detail specific tariqas, there are also others written on tariqas in general through the likes of Ibrahim Ismail (1994) and Mohd Shahgir Abdullah (2000) who records the genealogy (silsilah) of the common tariqas found in the region.

2.3 Ethnographic

A prime example of an ethnographic study is that by Syed Naguib Al-Attas (1963) that details the practices and the rituals of tariqas found in Malaya, covering aspects such as symbolism, ratib, zikr and such. Al-Attas was interested in uncovering how Sufism was understood and practiced by Malays. His study could be considered “puristic” as he seeks to uncover how some Sufi practices have deviated. In a chapter of his study, he discussed the “fake” Sufis, those who claim to be Sufi tariqas but have
questionable practices. In addition, he also provided brief accounts of important Malay Saints such as Hamzah Fansuri and Nurrudin Ar-Raniri. Al-Attas’ account could be said to be the first systematic anthropological study of tariqas in Malaya.

This was followed by an academic exercise by Abdul Rahman (1975/76) from the National University of Singapore whose work focuses on the Qadirri-Naqshbandi tariqa in Singapore. Through an in-depth study, Rahman detailed the practices and rituals of the tariqa not unlike that done by Al-Attas. However, his work is interesting as it seeks to explain tariqa as an in-between category between Malay animism and modern scripturalist Islam. Rahman theorizes that membership to tariqa is an adaptive measure as the individual adapts to the advance of modern\(^4\) scripturalist Islam. While he suggests that tariqas sympathize with indigenous religious experience, his work is lacking in thorough explanation of Malay animistic religion and how Sufism complements it, if at all. Nonetheless, his work is the start of situating Sufism within abstract binary categories of “traditional” and “modern”.

2.4 Sociological

Where sociological studies of Sufism are concerned, they mainly concentrate on structures that challenge its existence and growth. See

\(^4\) Modern here refers to the modernist/traditionalist debates confounding Islamic learning.
The bulk of literature is concerned with the Islamic Reformist movements of the late 20\textsuperscript{th} century (Sirriyeh, 1999; Azra, 1989; Steenbrink, 1993; Bruinessen, 1998). These studies focus on the impact of Islamic reformist movements who suggests \textit{tariqa} are “syncretic” forms of worship. Reformists call for the purging of “innovations” \textit{(bid’ah)} claimed to challenge the creed of Oneness \textit{(tauhid)} in Islam. Aside these “purist” reformers, there are those who wish to reform Islamic elements as they were perceived to be antithetical to modernity. These “modernist” reformers find inspiration through the likes of Muhammad Abduh of Egypt and Mawdudi of Pakistan. This suggests interaction between Western discourses on modernity and Muslim personalities of the reform movement. In both types of reforms, Sufism and in particular, \textit{tariqa}, have come under attack. This is due to their mystico-philosophical concerns and their reverence of \textit{Sheikhs}, which some view as risks to the supreme concept of the Oneness of God \textit{(tauhid)} in Islam. Furthermore, they are reputed to be hampering efforts towards modernity and developmental progress of Muslim societies. These studies, rife in the late 20\textsuperscript{th} century, led observers of religion to predict the inevitable demise of Sufism.

This is the point of departure for the study. While Islamic reformist movements led scholars to predict the decline of Sufism in upcoming
years, Howell’s (2007) recent study sought to question and challenge their assumptions. She took issue with the influential works of Geertz (1967) and Gellner (1981), who theorized the “apparently inevitable shift from the ‘classical styles’ of Islam (‘maraboutism’, centred around rural miracle-working saints and mystics, and the scholarly replication of tradition centred around the urban-based ‘ulama), to the dry ‘scripturalism’ of 19th and 20th century urban reformists” (8). However, the vitality of Sufism today proves the contrary.

Such premature conclusions are largely due to analytical categories that have plagued the study of Sufism. Voll (1994) rightly pointed out that “much of the sociological literature on Muslim societies has identified the 
tariqas with the illiterate and rural parts of society” (282). Reform movements are characteristically “modern” as opposed to “traditional” 
tariqas. Often, the perspective that binds the evaluation of 
tariqa is concerned with ideological analyses as reflected through the “traditionalist-modernist” debates - a consequent of the Islamic reformist movement (see Moaddel, 2002). These labels are not without their disparaging connotations perpetuated by political interests of various factions vying for the right to authority as played out during the “Kaum Tua-Kaum Muda”

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5 The Kaum Muda/Kaum Tua struggle was best reflected in the case of Indonesia through the late 19th century. Two big organizations representing each camp which are still active and greatly influential in Indonesia is Muhamadiyah and Nahdhatul Ulama, labelled Kaum Muda/Kaum Tua respectively.
struggle in the 1970s. This has resulted in a limited conceptualization of tariqas confined to the polemics of religious orientations.

Consequently, Voll (1994) suggests a reevaluation of the very analytical concepts underlying the study of Sufism as it “seems clear that the tariqas of the twenty-first century are not simply residual elements of society and culture from pre-modern times”.

Following that, Howell (2007) observes that the moribund description of Sufism as applied by Geertz and Gellner to name a few, was meant for the “popular, rural, ecstatic and illiterate variant” and goes on to suggest that they appeared to be “unaware of the existence, all over the Muslim world, of learned urban Sufis, whose following included members of the traditional elites” (8).

Howell’s conceptual delineation points to several dialectics such as: rural/urban, ecstatic/sober, illiterate/literate. The difference between rural and urban Sufism is extremely useful and deserves emphasis as the

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6 Entangled within such a paradigm, Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, or more popularly known as Hamka, coined the term “neo-Sufism” to suggest a type of reformed Sufism. In his popular treatise “Tasauf Moderen”, he stresses the important function of Sufism and spirituality in the lives of modern Muslims. However he remained critical of certain aspects of Sufism such as ritualized dzikr and exclusive faith (taqlid) to a Syekh, which he identified as peculiar to the tariqa i.e institutionalised Sufism. He deemed that these are perversions to Sufism and had to be excised from its practice. He identified tariqa as a problem as it promoted a dangerous dependence to the Sheikh and dissuaded individual agency. Therefore, his prescription for the modern day Sufi follower stresses on personal “do-it-yourself” type of spiritual development independent of the tariqa (Howell, 2007: 6). However, the re-imagination of Sufism and tariqa here, is not removed from the categories that bind them.

7 These polarities are Weberian “ideal types” for ease of conceptual analysis.
nature of urban development has affected religious experiences in new and radical ways.

Urban Sufism is concerned with the pietistic expression of Islam in the context of high material conditions of contemporary society. It would be erroneous to pinpoint the expression of urban Sufism to any one society but rather as existing in pockets across all Muslim societies. The merit of this conceptual tool addresses important class distinctions related to religious expression. It invites a re-imagination of tariqa from its association with strict asceticism of the past to what it is today.

3. Significance

The need to situate the contemporary analysis of tariqa within a cogent theoretical framework is pressing. Voll (1994) opines that the surprise in the vitality of Sufism today is “part of a broader surprise involving the continuing influence and strength of ‘religion’ itself in contemporary societies” (282). Here, Voll refers to the secularization thesis made popular in the early 20th century, which spelt the decline of religion as societies become increasingly modernized. This rhetoric was part and parcel of Enlightenment philosophy since the 18th century, which predicted religious decline as one of the central elements in secularization and modernization. Shiner (1967) in his conceptual study claims that the decline of religion would mean “previously accepted symbols, doctrines,
and institutions lose their prestige and influence. The culmination of secularization would be a religionless society” (in Voll, 1994).

Yet, today even the most modern of societies find the power and influence of religion continually pervasive. Today, one can see a renewed fervour in religiosity witnessed by born-again faithfuls, new religious movements and others. This observation has led scholars to seek recourse in contemporary theories of religious revival, which has put to rest the secularization thesis once prevalent in the study of religion. These developments have seen the sociological study of religious revival take root. Sufism and *tariqa* have also been assessed in such angles. However, these studies are largely focused on North America and have yet to be explored in other parts of the world.

The study of Sufism in Singapore and across the region have always been preoccupied with contrasting it against its opponents and documenting the tussle among them. Therefore, the study of Sufism in Singapore suffers from an insular paradigm. The disadvantages are obvious. It stagnates the study of the phenomenon within inner dynamics of the religion while forgoing other interplaying variables within Singapore and the larger global society. Factors such as religious pluralism, globalization, new age movements and how they affect Islam, much less, Sufism in Singapore has by far been neglected. This is an obvious gap since Singapore is a node of intercultural networks, and is permeable to forces of globalization from beyond its shores.
Furthermore, the dearth in the scholarship of *tariqa* and, more generally, Islam in Singapore, has led commentators to view Islam as a primordial and limiting facet in the lives of Malay/Muslims. The bind of ethnicity and religion, unique to the Malay/Muslim community in Singapore has the effect of essentializing religious identity as religion is viewed as unchanging for the Malay/Muslim. This has had a limited effect on the scientific study of Islam in Singapore. For example, the discourse on Islam is often political, legalist and most importantly, unitary. They are more often than not dominated by objectivist analyses that focus on a top-down approach without accounting for varieties within the religion or the agency involved in the experience of religion.

While any study of religion in Singapore should not neglect the role of the state, unfortunately there appears to be a disproportionate stress on the statist approach at the expense of uncovering other dynamics at play. This is greatly so as, strong governance in Singapore has coddled the study of every other social phenomenon under the bigger umbrella of state domination. The study of religion does not escape this prism as its political significance in Singapore’s conservative governance is rehashed time and time again (Tamney, 1992). Singapore’s intrusive manhandling and regulation of religion is well known (Turnet, 2007). Under the
Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA)\(^8\), the Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (MUIS) was institutionalized to administer all Malay/Muslim affairs. While this may be the case, it would be simplistic and inaccurate to suggest that all religious discourses fall within the purview of MUIS. Unfortunately, this facet has dominated and stunted the study of religion in Singapore beyond the relationship of religion and State. The study of religion, which focuses on the agency of subjects, is few and far between.

Following this, observing the increasing individual and group differentiation of the Singaporean community, Chua and Kwok (2001) present an anomaly to the national case through the Malay/Muslim community. They suggest that, “a general conservatism prevails among Malay Muslims in Singapore” as a consequence of “tightly drawn boundaries” between ethnic and religious identities. Such a suggestion is expected due to observations highlighted above. Unfortunately, a limited knowledge of the religious dynamics within the community limits the conceptualization of internal religious diversity and even latent competition. There is a tendency to view the apparent unity of the Muslim community as signs of religious, cultural and intellectual stasis – one that is conservative, traditional and insular.

\(^8\) In 1966, the Parliament of Singapore passed the Administration of Muslim Law Act or (AMLA) (Act 27) which makes provision for regulating Muslim religious affairs and to constitute a council to advise matters relating to the Muslim religion in Singapore and the Syariah Court. Consequently, the Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (MUIS) was established.
Referring to the study of religion in Singapore in general, Tong’s (2007) significant contribution to the sociology of religion in Singapore cannot be stressed enough. While accounting for religious conversion, he explored the different ways that traditional religion has adapted to new demands and the important role of agency in religious affiliation. Focusing on Chinese religions and Christianity, he explores the reasons for the increasing levels of conversion among Chinese Singaporeans from their ascribed Chinese religions to Christianity. He also explored the ways in which Chinese religions like Buddhism has emulated the pattern of canonical religions like Christianity. He suggests that, due to increased competition for adherents, Buddhism has adopted texts, “cell groups”, organized camps etc. He coined this as the “intellectualization” of religion. The intellectualization of religion is “the process of greater systematization of religious doctrines towards the ends of rationalizing the beliefs and rituals of the religion” (ibid). Tong suggests that the appeal to the intellectualization of religion has led to an increase in the levels of conversion to Christianity.

Therefore, in the same fashion, this study seeks to analyze and explain the processes that have led to the changing demographics of tariqa membership today, including the above thesis on the “intellectualization of religion”. It will focus on the dynamics of membership as is played out on the ground rather than from a top-down fashion.

5. Methodology & Framework
In an attempt at a suitable explanation, this exercise shall focus on the tariqa Naqshbandi-Haqqani in Singapore. This is so since the Naqshbandi tariqa is one of the oldest and most popular tariqas of the Muslim world. As will be recounted in succeeding chapters, the Naqshbandi was introduced to the region from as early as the 19th century. Since then, it has assumed many appendages – one of the most popular is the Naqshbandi Qaddiri. While this tariqa is active, it is the recent Naqshbandi Haqqani variant that is attracting followers. The Naqshbandi Haqqani is of recent import, first introduced to Singapore in 1991. The appendage Haqqani is a namesake derived from Sheikh Nazim Adil al-Haqqani. Due to his high spiritual station, Sheikh Nazim was conceived to be the “reviver, renewer and a caller to God in this day and age”. With the aid of his protégé and son-in-law, Sheikh Hisham Kabbani, the tariqa has spread far and wide. Most significantly, it has spread to Europe and North America and is currently one of the most influential Muslim groups in the United States. The Naqshbandi Haqqani operates from its headquarters in the United States and Sheikh Hisham Kabbani is currently serving as the President of the Islamic Supreme Council of America (ISCA).

Where the Naqshbandi Haqqani Singapore is concerned the peculiar demographic that the tariqa is attracting is intriguing. The Naqshbandi Haqqani is popular among youths, the educated and the professionals. Most, if not all of their followers are fluent in English as it is the tariqa’s
main medium of instruction. This is a novelty, since the traditional medium of religious instruction in the region is the Malay language. Most of their core members are professionals in their vocations. Some are entrepreneurs, with thriving businesses of their own. Some are managers at Information Technologies (IT) companies. Most are highly educated, with at least tertiary educational qualifications in technical fields. There is also a wider ethnic mix among the members of the group. At any one meeting, those who are ethnically Malay, Indian, Chinese, Turkish and Arab etc. can be found. These considerations led me to single out the Naqshbandi Haqqani tariqa as a case for study. In more ways than one, it is significantly different from the traditional tariqas found in this region. Therefore, as the Naqshbandi Haqqani snowballs in interest and membership, the impetus to its attraction could point to changing dynamics of religious membership among Muslims in Singapore.

This exercise focuses on qualitative research. As such, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation methods were employed. My main respondents were the core members of the Naqshbandi Haqqani Singapore and through snowball sampling I made contacts with others in the group. I have conducted a total of 30 semi-structured interviews among 20 participants, as some participants were interviewed more than once. Each interview lasted for approximately 60 minutes. I have conducted three focus group discussions among the same

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9 See Appendix One for details of respondents.
set of participants. Each group consisted of three to five members and each discussion lasted for approximately 90 minutes. I employed the participant observation method during the ritual sessions on Thursday nights and during the public forums conducted by Sheikh Hisham Kabbani. As at time of research, Sheikh Hisham has visited Singapore four times, the latest being in May 2010. The main purpose of employing qualitative methodology is to engage participants in an emic approach to analysis. In addition, I engaged in considerable textual analysis of the books and texts that the Naqshbandi Haqqani has published in abundance. I often refer my interpretation of these texts to the tariqa members’ to narrow any dissonance found between my reading and theirs, while retaining my independence of analysis. The fieldwork for this exercise lasted for approximately 6 months.

To begin, it is essential to trace the historical development of Sufism and tariqa in Singapore. Therefore, chapter two will recount the history of Sufism in the region and specifically Singapore from the 13th to the 20th centuries. This will contextualize the degree of influence and impact Sufism has had to the region, sealing its deep roots into the fabric of Islam and Muslim society.

Chapter three will then introduce the case study in question that is the Naqshbandi Haqqani. A brief history of the tariqa will be provided that includes the various Naqshbandi variants such as Naqshbandi-Qaddiri,
Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi etc. This will be followed by a discussion on the Naqshbandi-Haqqani, expounding on the Sheikh who carries the namesake of the *tariqa*. The chapter will end with a brief ethnographic account of the Naqshbandi Haqqani Singapore including its history, rituals and accounts of membership.

Chapter four will analyze local and global contemporary events, which have contributed to the rise of *tariqa*. The first part of the analysis utilizes the concept of “frame” - an important conceptual tool in social movements’ literature. This concept borrows from and is an extension of Goffman’s (1974) frame analytic perspective. According to Goffman, a “frame” is a “schemata of interpretation” that enables individuals “to locate, perceive, identify and label” occurrences within their life space and the world at large (in Snow et. al., 1986: 464). This concept is extended in social movements’ theoretical literature to suggest that a prerequisite of any kind of movement participation requires a “frame alignment” process. Frame alignment refers to “the linkage of individual and social movement organization (SMO) interpretive orientations, such that some set of individual interests, values and beliefs and SMO activities, goals, and ideology are congruent and complementary” (ibid: 464). In this case, the Naqshbandi Haqqani *tariqa* is suitably conceptualized as a social movement, one with a discernible mission, leader, organization and mobilization. Conceived as such, I proceed to analyze the Naqshbandi Haqqani’s frame alignment processes in its effort to establish resonance
between the *tariqa* and its members towards a sizeable mass of following. I argue that the Naqshbandi Haqqani bridges its frame of reference with prevailing global conditions of the day so as to ride on an extensive platform of global concern and consequence. In so doing, it bridges its appeal to individuals by simultaneously extending its frame of reference and amplifying its concerns.

Following through with frame analysis, chapter five explores the role of the “frame articulator” in establishing resonance between the movement and its adherents. In studies of SMOs, this aspect is largely overshadowed by the focus on resource mobilization and political theories to the extent that the role of the leader is obscured. Respondents reveal that a major source of attraction to the *tariqa* is the Sheikh. To most, the Sheikh represents the fount of Truth, the spiritual guide whose directions give light to all aspects of life. The appeal to a religious experience that emphasizes an intimate mentor-student relation, unique to the *tariqa*, deserves inquiry. This chapter shall utilize Weber’s concept of charismatic authority and the prophet to discuss the role Sheikh Nazim plays in the *tariqa*.

Yet, even with the general rise in interest to *tariqa*, the preference for one over another deserves inquiry and this will be accounted for in chapters six and seven. Most literature on religious movements and specifically *tariqa* stress the importance of kinship networks. While this may be the case for
most tariqas, the nature of urban Sufism has radically changed forms of membership. This is so as the medium of transmission for tariqa practices has expanded. Many tariqas today are active on the Internet, encouraging self-subscription for individual seekers. The nature of urban living is such that familial networks especially extended ones have faltered ensuring that the traditional configuration of tariqa associations no longer remains to be the case. In this novel configuration, the impetus and motivations to membership becomes a subject of fascinating inquiry. I begin with the assumption that membership is motivated rather than fortuitous. As such, the study wishes to focus on two factors peculiar to the Naqshbandi Haqqani that is 1) language and 2) new media.

The analysis wishes to focus on the relationship between religious membership and capital. I wish to employ an agency-driven perspective to my analysis of religious membership through applying Bourdieu’s battery of conceptual tools and suggest that membership to a religious organization is driven by affinity to capital and determined by habitus. So conceived, it is clear that the rise in the membership to the Naqshbandi Haqqani is to a large extent, class-oriented and effectively functions as a site of social inclusion and inevitably that of social exclusion. In addition, while uncovering the role of new media in its application to tariqa, this study seeks to tease out the ways in which the tariqa has transformed in this day and age to accommodate to novel mediums of transmission. I argue that the application of new media not only revolutionized the forms of
expressions; rather it has substantially changed the content and substance of the *tariqa* in more ways than one.
CHAPTER TWO

2.1 Sufism pre-16th century

The earliest records of Islam in the region dated to the 7th century. However, this did not lead to a massification of Islam among the people until the 13th century. Theorists of Islamization deduced that the flourish of trade between the region and other parts of the world,10 accelerated conversion to Islam. However, the presence of trade in the region pre-dated mass conversion. Evidence showed that Arabs, Indians and Persians traveled to the Malay Archipelago to trade from as early as the 9th century. Consequently, Alatas (1985) questioned, “was trade simply a factor that facilitated the dissemination of Islam or was it a contributing factor…”.

To solve this conundrum, Johns (1975) insisted that the study of Islam in Java requires an “extra-Javanese framework” i.e. one that incorporates concurrent developments of the entire Muslim world. Focusing on the period when Islam noticeably flourished and impacted a lasting presence upon the region, he postulated that Sufism played a determining role in the spread of Islam to Southeast Asia. He theorized that it is attributed to the, “remarkable development of the Sufi mystical movements and the organization of the religious orders associated with it, which between the 13th and 18th centuries came to dominate the entire Muslim world” (145).

According to Gibbs (in Johns, 1975),

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10 The Malay Archipelago lay along the main trade route between western Asia and the Far East and the spice islands of Moluccas.
“...after the fall of the Abbaside Caliphate in 1258, the Sufis played an increasingly important part in preserving the unity of the Islamic world and that during these years the Sufi orders gradually became stable and disciplined foundations and developed affiliations within the trade…” (24).

This was to such an extent that by the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, membership to a mystical order was practically synonymous to the profession of Islam.

The need to appropriate the study of Islam in the region with concurrent developments throughout the Islamic world is pressing and requires further study. For example, the networks of cultural and religious exchanges are evident among the great Sufi scholars of the region such as Hamzah Fansuri, Shams al-Din, Ar-Raniri and As-Singkili. The Acehnese Muslim kingdom had strong cultural exchanges with the Mogul and Ottoman empires (Milner, 1995). This suggests that the development of Islam in pre-colonial Southeast Asia cannot be studied in exclusion from the developments of the rest of the Muslim world. For a long time, this angle of study has been neglected. Only if scholars were to seriously consider this, will fruitful advances of knowledge on the Islamization processes be uncovered.

In addition, studies on Islamization processes still suffer from a paradigm deficit. Macro-theories and processes that focus on the supply-side have dominated these studies. Be it through trade, conquests or missionary activity, these theories have solely focused on the supply-side thus
neglecting the agency of the individuals whose conversion is in question\textsuperscript{11}. Borrowing an economic analogy, as with any cultural exchange, there exists a market for it. Reid (1999) alluded to this, if briefly, when he remarked that while the Islamic presence was unequivocally brought by trade and consolidated by political/military power,

\begin{quote}
“yet every Southeast Asian who embraced Islam had to undergo his own reconciliation between long-held assumptions about the shape of the world and the central features of the new doctrine” (17).
\end{quote}

According to Reid (1999), it is possible to suggest that the dominant religious belief system of Southeast Asia before Islam was deeply concerned with the rituals to propitiate the dead. Islam did not overhaul this system but replaced it with a system, which generally respects the dominant beliefs. The mystical forms of religious experience brought by the Sufi teachers were amicable to past beliefs. Popular Sufism was linked to the spiritual powers of holy men, apostles, rulers and others whose blessings (\textit{baraka}) were manifested. Trimingham (1971) attested that, “clear distinction cannot be made between the orders and saint veneration, since God’s protégés are within the orders”. Reid goes on to mention,

\begin{quote}
“the extreme reverence for such figures (Sufi masters) and their graves confirm that it was indeed Sufi masters and practices which made the greatest impact in the region” (20).
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{11} It can be contended to what extent is there individual agency in the conversion processes. If one were to dismiss the theory of conquest, as many scholars have since it is clear that the coming of Islam to the region was a peaceful one. It can therefore be assumed that the peaceful process was complimented by the relative ease in which the people had accepted the religion.
Scholars (Milner, Azra, Reid, 1999; Alatas, Johns, 1975; Fatimi, 1951) unequivocally attest to the compatibility and tolerance of Sufi tariqas to the ways of thought and cultural traditions of the time. Sufistic Islam flourished in the early stages, largely due to the mystical aspects of its practices that was amicable to the Hindu-Buddhist and syncretic elements of locals.

2.2 Sufism from the 16th to the 19th centuries

Sufism in the region is manifested in two broad ways; 1) as a courtly phenomenon and; 2) as popular consumption on the level of the masses. These two processes were concurrent and overlapping. Johns (1975) tells us that the process of Islamization began in ports as a court-phenomenon. He pointed out to works such as Sejarah Banten, Babad Tanah Jawi and Sejarah Melayu, which illustrate the nature of the study of Islam through peripatetic Sufi teachers. He also pointed to the proliferation of Malay Sufi scholars who were patronized by the royal courts in the late 16th and early 17th centuries such as Hamzah Fansuri, Shams Al-Din, Al-Raniri and As-Singkeli. As-Singkeli’s tomb is venerated by students of the Shattariya tariqa (Reid, 1999). These pointed to the presence of the Qadirri, Naqshbandi, Shattariya and Suhrawardi tariqas in the region.

When the Portuguese conquest of Malacca in 1511 placed an end to the city’s role as the centre of Islam (Milner, 1995), the centre of Islam
subsequently changed hands with the kingdom of Acheh. Acheh, known as the “Forecourt of the Holy Land”, experienced its greatest prosperity under Sultan Iskandar Muda (1608-37). During his reign, a five-storeyed mosque was built that aroused admiration of many. It was during this time that the famous Malay Sufi Hamzah Fansuri arrived to Acheh and was patronized by the royal court as a theologian. Fansuri was a peripatetic Sufi who visited some important centers of Islamic learning in the Middle East, including Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem. While he was in Baghdad, he was initiated into the Qadirriya tariqa. His student was Shams Al-Din of Pasai (1630) who continued his teachings dealing mainly with kalam and tassawuf. A century later Nur Al-Din al-Raniri of Rander in Gujarat resided in the court during the reign on Iskandar Thani (1637-41). He was aggressive in his opposition to the Wujuddiya Doctrines of Fansuri which he claimed to be pantheistic, and therefore astray. An in-depth exposition of these debates is provided by Al-Attas (1966, 1970). Raniri himself was a follower of the Aydarusiyya and Qadirriya tariqas and was later initiated into the Rifaiyya tariqa. His work “al-Sirat al-Mustaqim”, the first books on fiqh in Malay language insisted on God’s Transcendence and emphasized the importance of sharia in mystical practices. Even then, it can be seen that the opposition to Sufism was not directed at Sufism per se but what was deemed to be “false Sufism” which violated the sharia or which placed

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12 *Kalām* in Islamic practice relates to the discipline of seeking theological knowledge through debate and argument.

13 *Tasawwuf* is the science of the inner, mystical dimension of Islam.
too much emphasis on the Immanence of God at the expense of His Transcendence.

Therefore, it is supposed that the history of Islam in the Malay world was characterized by a series of reformisms, “each one reinterpreting previous texts, institutions and practices in a new light” (81). This included the early orthodox reactions of Raniri in the 17th century, followed by the rise of legalistic Islamic interpretations in the 18th century in West Sumatra and later the purifying emphasis of the Padri movements. A sufficient developmental similarity can be seen in Java at around the same time, if not earlier. According to Azra (1989), some scholars maintain that the earliest opposition to mystical-syncretistic Islam was found in Java. Pigeaud pointed out that since the 15th century, an Islamic literature, produced by a small number of Javanese, strongly criticized a group of works, which emphasized a mystic interpretation of Islam. Other examples include the account of the Wali Songo of the 15th century who collectively condemned Syakh Siti Jenar to death.

The influence of court theologians affected the way in which Sufism was experienced by the masses. Azra (1989) suggests that one of the consequences of the 17th century orthodox reactions was that Sufi teachings were taught in stages. For example, prominent Palembang scholars such as Shihab al-Din b. Abd Allah Muhammad preached the more sharia-oriented Sufism of al-Junayd, al-Qushayri and al-Ghazali, for
fear that other doctrines would lead fellow Muslims astray. He assumed they would misunderstand such works because of their lack of solid grounding in Islamic knowledge, particularly the *sharia*. Al-Palimbani himself accepts certain notions of philosophical Sufism as developed by Ibn Arabi, al-Jili and al-Sumatrani who he felt was to be recommended to advanced students of Sufism who have “gained a fuller understanding of Islam”. He maintained that those who have not reached such a level to read *fiqh* or *sharia*-oriented mystical works, instead.

According to Al-Attas (1963), nine orders prevailed in the Malay world and they are the Qadirriya, Naqshbandiyya, Rifa’iyyah, Shadhiliyya, Chistiyya, Shattariya and Ahmadiyyah (also known as Idrisiyya). Out of the nine, only a few gained major popularity among the masses in the region and they are the Qadirriya, Naqshbandiyya and Ahmadiyya. The last being the most recently founded by Sayyid Ahmad ibn Idris (d. 1837) of Morocco. Among Malay Sufis who were initiated and later taught these *tariqas* were Syeikh Nuruddin ar-Raniri, Syeikh ‘Abdur Rauf bin Ali al-Fansuri, Syeikh Yusuf Tajul Khalwati al-Mankatsi, Syeikh ‘Abdus Shamad al-Falimbani, Syeikh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fatani, Syeikh Zainal Abidin bin Muhammad al-Fathani, Syeikh Wan Ali Kutan al-Kalantani and many others.

Although these *tariqas* prevailed from the 16th century on, they were noted to be less structured in their forms and organization compared to other *tariqas* in other parts of the Muslim world (Reid, 1999). They are never
distinct from one another with respect to their pattern of authority and
genral organization. Also, these tariqas enjoy a great degree of interaction
and hybridization. A famous Malay Sufi, Syeikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas
combined both Tariqa Qadiriyya and Tariqa Naqshbandiyya for the
hybridized ‘Tariqa Qadirri wa Naqshandi’, which remains to be one of the
most popular tariqas of the Malay world today.

Many of the tariqas are not monopolized by one Sheikh but instead enjoy
the leadership of many local Sheikhs and are loosely organized. There is
no Syakbul-Mashaikh, leader of all Sheikhs, or Syakbul-Turuq, leader of all
tariqas. Membership in tariqa is not exclusive; one may belong to one or
more tariqas. The leadership of tariqa is not hereditary but is passed off to
the best among the disciples. Each tariqa has a number of zawiyahs (orders)
where ceremonies, rites and religious exercises are performed. The
Sheikhs of the tariqa will travel periodically in their villages, districts and
states to visit and give further instructions to their disciples and followers
or to initiate novices into the tariqa. Al-Attas (1963) provides a
comprehensive account of the tariqa and its various facets in a rare
ethnographic account of tariqas in the Malay world.

2.3 Sufism from the 19th to the 20th centuries (with a special focus on
Singapore)

The role of Singapore in the Islamization process was never more
pronounced than in the mid-19th century, during the colonial period.
Singapore brought together a cross-section of the Muslim peoples of Southeast, South Asia and the Middle East. It gained a reputation as a centre of Islamic life and learning due to its position in relation to the Pilgrimage and Arab migration. One of the most defining aspects was the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Singapore also served as a centre for publication and distribution of religious writings and a gathering place for teachers. Due to the varied religious scholars it attracted from Hadhramaut, Hijaz, Patani, Acheh, Palembang and Java, students who wished to further their studies in law or doctrine came to Singapore, if not to Mecca. The city stood at the heart of the network of communications which fed a constant stream of revitalized and revolutionary thought into the region. Singapore was an archetype of an urban, mercantile society where piety and economy went hand in hand. Due to its expansive role, Singapore in the 19th century gained a widespread reputation as a centre of Islamic life and learning. However, its reputation slowly took a turn well into the 20th century and at the advent of Independence.

The turn of the new century saw significant impacts upon Singapore and Islam in the region. It was a period of major social restructuring with the eve of colonialism and the dawn of the independence of a young nation. Developments in the Islamic world also saw much upheaval. Among the
various developments in the 20th century, particular trends can be identified as transformative of the general climate of Islam in the region.

The early 20th century saw the birth of Muslim reform movements that affected the practice of Islam around the world. The famous periodical “Al-Imam” was founded in Singapore in 1906 under the editorship of a Minangkabau Muslim reformer, Taher Jalaluddin (b. 1869). Many of its articles found inspiration in the “Al-Manar” and echoed the reform agendas of its editors Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida (Feener, 2007: 11). Local reformers such as Syed Syeikh Ahmad Al Hadi and the above-mentioned Taher Jalaluddin had spent some time in Makkah and Egypt and were influenced by reformist ideas, which called for compatibility between Islam, science and reason. They also called for the reopening of the door of reason (ijtihad) in understanding the Qur'an and the Hadith. The reformist agenda and its proponents rallied under the banner of the “Kaum Muda” (the progressive group) and had heated ideological battles against the “Kaum Tua” (the conservative group).

Roff (1967) observed that the battle between these groups played out most significantly in the realm of education. Reformers sought to overhaul the current system of education, which they felt were “medieval” as characterized by “rudimentary and repetitious theological learning” (Aljunied & Dayang, 2005, 4). The old schools were also “too narrowly focused on the fardhu ‘ain which did not prepare the Muslim youths for
socio-economic changes and new employment created by the British colonialists” (ibid). Most significantly, these reformists contend that the old type of learning was “clouded with doctrinal misunderstanding and superstitious belief”. The wave of the reformist agenda swept through the helm of old leadership who were automatically subsumed under the label of “Kaum Tua”. This inevitably posed a challenge to the ways in which Islam has been taught and experienced ever since, which is characterized by its general Sufistic orientation. Among others, the intense respect that a student accords the Sheikh of a tariqa was severely criticized as a form of “blind loyalty” debilitating to the development of a rational and modern outlook to religion. Reform developments were strong and significant. As a result, tariqa groups and practices were generally subdued. They were also often stereotyped as the domain for the old-fashioned, unprogressive and unthinking.

However, the challenge against tariqa and Sufism was not consolidated until the late 20th century in the 1970s to 1980s. The Islamic revival movements that exploded unto the Southeast Asian scene characterized this time period. It reflected the larger climate of Islamic revival throughout the Muslim world, which was brought about by a number of factors. Commentators identified the “Islamic revolution in Iran, the Soviet invasion of a predominantly Muslim Afghanistan, the shooting incident at the Masjidil Haram, the intensification of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the political and economic leverage that the Muslim nations in
the Gulf exerted in international politics as a result of their newfound oil power” (Mutalib, 1990). All these events served to affirm the Islamic consciousness of Muslims in the region as demonstrated by a renewed sense of purpose and mission. A spirit of intellectualism and activism also flourished. A case in point being the periodical “Sedar” (Aware/awake) established by the National University of Singapore’s Muslim Society.

More significantly, the renewed vigour for purist ideologies was entrenched among local Muslims who recently returned from the Middle East. The Wahabbi movement in Saudi Arabia influenced this group of returning scholars. The Saudi government was also active in funding local Muslim organizations. A case in point, the Muhammadiyah organization in Singapore received substantial funding for the building of their school - Madrasah Al-Arabiah. The ideological drive of these purists was singular\textsuperscript{14}. They called for the strict return to the Qur’an and the Sunnah labelling all other practices innovatory (\textit{bid’ah}) and a slander towards Islam. Their list of excretionary practices included communal \textit{dzikir} and \textit{maulid}, which was typical of the experience of Islam in this region. The attack from these purists dealt a huge blow to \textit{tariqas} and Sufism. The \textit{tariqas}, which were presently subdued, were consequently relegated to the brink of extinction.

\textsuperscript{14} For more information, read Aljunied (2009).
Aside the developments in the Islamic world, the mid 20th century was a tumultuous time for the region, especially Singapore. Having achieved Independence from colonial rulers and subsequently separated from Malaya, the foremost agenda for the young independent state was development. Singapore committed itself to major industrialization projects and rallied the country toward mantras of survival, development and progress. Thousands of jobs were created and the population was soon plugged into the new economic grid. Development and municipal issues were at the forefront of the political agenda and were foremost in the consciousness of the citizenry. The rhetoric of development coincided with the spirit of reform and revivalism of Islam in the region. Muslim reformists found reason for their cause and rallied that Islam be reformed from within in order for it to be coherent and relevant for the current developmental climate. Sufi tariqas, deemed to be excrescences of the past were pushed further into the background, if not altogether censured.
CHAPTER THREE

3.1 Sufism today

Well poised for extinction, the *tariqa* is witnessing a significant revival today. This can be seen through the rise in visibility of *tariqa* groups, youthful membership, active participation in virtual communities and the formation of new *tariqa* groups. A case in point is the *tariqa* Naqshbandi Haqqani whose relatively recent presence, especially in Singapore, makes for a fascinating case study. The *tariqa* was first introduced to Singapore in 1991 and only took root half a decade later. Today, it is one of the biggest organized *tariqa* groups in Singapore. Founded by Sheikh Nazim Haqqani, the *tariqa* has set foot across the globe with the aid of his son-in-law and protégé, Sheikh Hisham Kabbani. The latter is active in making travels all over the world on visits to local *zawiyahs*. In the course of my research, Sheikh Hisham has been to Singapore four times, latest in May 2010. More often than not, his stopover in Singapore is part of an extended tour and visit through Southeast Asia, to Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia.

My choice in the Naqshbandi Haqqani as a dedicated case study is several. Firstly, the Naqshbandi Haqqani claims to belong to the oldest and most widespread *tariqa* throughout the Islamic world, the Naqshbandi. The appendage “Haqqani” is acquired through its association with the current living master, Sheikh Nazim Adil al-Haqqani. It shares the common initiatic chain (*silsilah*) of the Naqshbandi, which traces itself back to
Saidina Abu Bakar as-Siddiq to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)\textsuperscript{15}. Bearing this in mind, the \textit{tariqa} prides itself for being staunchly traditional. At the same time, it claims to be the “reviver of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century” (Kabbani, 1994) and incorporates many technological innovations. As a result, the \textit{tariqa} has many adaptations to its name; among others is the provision to take \textit{bay'ab} online. The negotiations between the traditional and the modern are a feature of the Naqshbandi Haqqani and its consequent effects is noteworthy. Secondly, the Naqshbandi Haqqani is successful in attracting youths and the educated to its \textit{tariqa}. Its attraction to these social groups warrants a study of the appeal it carries to its name. Thirdly, the contemporary influence of the Naqshbandi Haqqani is unparalleled in comparison to other \textit{tariqas}. In a recent joint publication of the 500 most influential Muslims in 2009 by the Georgetown University's The Prince Alwaleed Bin Talaal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding and The Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre, Sheikh Nazim Adil al-Haqqani stands at number 49. Sheikh Hisham Kabbani and Muhammad Nasir, the President of the Naqshbandi Haqqani Singapore, also made the list.

3.2 \textit{Tariqa Naqshbandi}

\textsuperscript{15} The Naqshbandi is the only \textit{tariqa} that traces its origins to Saidina Abu Bakar As-Siddiq. Other \textit{tariqas} trace themselves to Saidina Ali Karamallahu Wajahah.
The Naqshbandi tariqa is known to be one of the major, oldest and most widespread tariqas of the Muslim world. Their historical role that spanned over more than five centuries of the Islamic era points to an organic relationship with the social, spiritual and intellectual developments of the Muslim community.

Baha ad-Din Naqshband, whose namesake is the tariqa today, was born in 1318 in the village of Qasr-i Hinduvan (Qasri Arifa) near Bukhara, and he died there in 1389. Most of his life was spent in Bukhara and contiguous areas of Transaxonia. Baha ad-Din Naqshband’s life information is lacking since he forbade his followers to record anything of his deeds or sayings during his lifetime. He died and was buried in his native village in 1389. His tomb became one of the principal places of visitation in the Islamic East. Baha ad-Din himself entered into the highest rank of the Saints worthy of mention in one breath with Abd al-Qadir Gilani. It was above all due to the impact of his spiritual personality that the tariqa retained his namesake.

Sirhindi is an important figure in the Naqshbandi line after Baha ad-Din. The same way as the latter’s spiritual personality caused the silsilah to be designated as Naqshbandi, so too did Sirhindi’s significance result in the appendage of Mujaddidi. Most surviving Naqshbandi groups in fact define themselves as Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi. Westward transmission of the

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16 See Appendix Two for the silsilah (genealogy) “Tree of the Most Distinguished Naqshbandi Haqqani Path and Related Paths”.
Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi took place in the early part of the 19th century and is associated with the name of Maulana Khalid Baghdad (d. 1827). Maulana Khalid’s spiritual presence was felt in many parts of the Islamic world such that he is the most significant figure in the Naqshbandi silsilah after Sirhindi. Like Sirhindi, his name came to designate a branch of the order, the Khalidiya. Just as the Mujaddiya branch came to overshadow most other branches of the Naqshbandiya in India and the Ottoman lands, so too has the Khalidiyya become almost synonymous with the order in the western part of the Islamic worlds.

Khalidi Syaks also took the Naqshbandiya to distant areas of the Muslim worlds where it had previously been either unknown or unimportant such as Ceylon, Mozambique and Sumatra. From Sumatra it spread north to the Malay Peninsula, and east to Borneo, the Sulu Archipelago, and Southern Mindanao. The Hajj played an enormous and important role in the spread of the Naqshbandiyya to Muslims of distant lands. The Naqshbandiya-Khalidiyya has also in more recent times devoted its cause to the supremacy of the shari‘a and the ascendancy of the Islamic ideal in the Muslim world. The Khalidi Naqshbandis have also played an important role in Muslim resistance to foreign domination. They participated prominently in the Achehnese wars against the Dutch, fought Thai rule of
Patani in the northernmost part of the Malay Peninsula; and contributed to the ferment of Muslim militancy in the Southern Phillipines\textsuperscript{17}.

### 3.3 The Naqshbandiyya in the Malay world

The Naqshbandiyya is recorded to have a long and sustaining history in the Malay world\textsuperscript{18}. The first known student and later teacher of the \textit{tariqa} is Syeikh Yusuf al-Mankatsi Tajuh Khalwati (d. 1699) who lived in Bugis-Makassar, Sulawesi.

However, the spread of the Naqshbandiyya to the Malay Peninsula and especially Singapore, is credited to Syeikh Ismail Bin Abdullah Minkabawi (d. 1864) who spread the teachings of \textit{tariqa} Naqshbandi-Khalidiyya throughout the region. He travelled frequently from Singapore to Kedah and while in Singapore penned two works that discussed the esoteric aspects of the tariqa Naqshbandiyya, “\textit{Mawahibul Falaq bi Syarhi Qaibidah al-‘Arif Billah al-Qadbi Nashiruddin Ibn Bintil Milaq aSy-Syazili}” (1851) and “\textit{Ar-Rahmatul Habithah fi Zikri Ismiz Zati war Rabithabi}” (1852).

Since its introduction to the region, the \textit{tariqa} has attracted many followers and successors who brought the Naqshbandi teaching to various parts of

\textsuperscript{17} Contrary to popular perception of the ascetic and stoic Sufis, the Sufis of history played an active role in retaliation and aggression against colonial masters, as recounted in the example above. This was also the case in Africa during the French rebellion.

\textsuperscript{18} The Naqshbadiyya vein that reached the Malay region can be traced back to its transmission from as early as Syeikh Al-Imam Muhammad Baqibillah, which suggests that it was transmitted through India.
the Malay world. Among those associated with the *tariqa* were, Syeikh Syihabuddin Al-Haj bin Abdullah Muhammad al-Jawi, Syeikh Muhammad Nafis bin Idris bin Al-Hussein al-Banjari, Syeikh Daud bin Abdullah al-Fathani and Syeikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas who joined both *tariqa* Naqshbandiyya and Qadirriya. By this time *tariqas* were enjoying a high degree of interaction and association. In other places out of the Peninsula, the *tariqa* Naqshbandi Muzhhariya is associated with Saiyid Muhammad Shalih (d. 1890) in Riau Lingga, Kalimantan Barat and Jawa Timur. In Pontianak, the *tariqa* Naqshbandi Muzhhairiya is also widespread and is associated with Saiyid Abdullah az-Zawawi (d. 1924). The *tariqa* Naqsbandi-Ahmadiyya is also well known and is associated with Syeikh Ahmad Khatib Minangkabawi.

The long and nuanced history of the *tariqa* Naqshbandi attests to its strong and widespread influence across the Malay Archipelago. It is said to be one of the major *tariqas* alongside *tariqa* Qadirriya. The non-exclusive nature of *tariqa* membership then, ensured great interaction and cooperation among different *tariqas*.

### 3.4 *Tariqa* Naqshbandi Haqqani

Syakh Nazim Adil al-Haqqani was born in Larnaca, Cyprus on the 23rd of April 1922 CE / 26th Sha’ban 1340 AH. His lineage from his father’s side traces to Abd al-Qadir Gilani, founder of the *tariqa* Qadirriya. His lineage
from his mother traces to Jalaluddin Rumi, founder of the tariqa Mevlevi. He traces relations back to Saidina Hasan and Saidina Husin grandchildren of the Prophet (pbuh). As a youth, he was sent to a secular high school to study the natural sciences and at night he would concentrate himself to studying the religious sciences of the teachings of the tariqa Mevlevi and Qadirri. He also studied Divine Law, jurisprudence, the science of the Traditions, the science of logic and the commentary of the Qur'an. After the completion of high school he moved to Istanbul and studied chemical engineering at the University of Istanbul. At the same time he studied the Divine Law and the Arabic language with Syeikh Jamaluddin al-Lasuni (d. 1955).

During his first year in Istanbul, he met his spiritual master, Syakh Sulayman Arzurumi (d. 1948). He then learned the discipline of the tariqa Naqshbandi. At a certain period of time in his spiritual ferment, he made his journey to Damascus to receive spiritual guidance from Syakh Abd Allah ad-Daghestani through the rubaniyya method. In the year 1945, he arrived in Damascus where he was spiritually initiated into the Golden Chain. He was advised to return to his homeland to spread the way of the Naqshbandis. Since then he has been received widely in Cyprus, Lebanon

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19 This meant that he did not meet with Sheikh Daghestani physically, but was in contact with him through a spiritual connection. The rubaniyya method of transmission is a common mode of reception of knowledge among Sufis. More often than not, the rubaniyya method is used in transmitting knowledge between a murid and a deceased master. In this form of spiritual transmission, the spirits meet in the world called 'alam al-arwah (the world of spirits) which is beyond the 'alam al-ajsam (the material plane). This is called the 'uwaysi transmission of spiritual knowledge. The spiritual connection is as powerful and effective as the physical connection. (http://www.naqshbandi.org/chain/uwaysi.htm, 28 February 2010)
and Syria. His travels did not end there as he went on to spread the teachings of the Naqshbandi across the world,

“As Shah Naqshband was the reviver in Bukhara and Central Asia, as Ahmad Sirhindu Mujaddidi was the reviver of the second Islamic millennium, as Khalid al-Baghdadi was the reviver of Islam, the Divine Law and the Way in the Middle East, Syakh Muhammad Nazim Adil al-Haqqani is the reviver, the renewer, and the caller to God in this age, the age of technology and material progress. Syakh Nazim has been blessed with the responsibility to reach all around the world on a mission of enlightenment. His goal is to restore the consciousness of God among all peoples and invite them to sincere belief and worship.” (Kabbani, 2004).

In 1986, Sheikh Nazim traveled to the Far East. Among the places he visited were India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Brunei, Malaysia and Singapore. He was welcomed by sultans, presidents, members of parliament, government officials and common people. In Brunei, he was welcomed by Sultan Haji Hasan al-Bolkiah and is considered the Saint of the Age. He is considered one of the great Sheikhs of the Naqshbandi Order in Malaysia20 and is well respected among Muslims in Singapore. Sheikh Muhammad Nazim Adil al-Haqqani is considered “the reviver, the renewer and the caller to God in this age, the age of technology and material progress” (Kabbani, 1995).

In his travels, Sheikh Nazim covered most countries including the UK, Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Belgium, Holland and Spain in the Western Europe. He also visited Bosnia, the Middle East, Malaysia,

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20 The Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (JAKIM) had issued a ban on the Naqshbandi Haqqani dated 3rd April 2000 (http://www.e-fatwa.gov.my/jakim/keputusan_view.asp?keyID=158, 28 February 2010). However, the last that it is known is that the ban has been lifted. A verification with the President of the Naqshbandi Haqqani Singapore confirmed that the tariqa is widely practiced in Malaysia and Sheikh Adnan, his protégé, had visited the country recently.
Indonesia, Japan, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, South Africa, Russia and the
Caucasus, Uzbekistan and Central Asia and North America. In all these
areas, he spread his teachings and established zawiyahs and elected local
leaders to supervise the tariqa in his absence.

Sheikh Nazim first traveled to North America in 1991. He was 70 years of
age when he traveled to more than 15 states meeting with people of
diverse backgrounds and religious beliefs including Muslims, Christians,
Jews, Sikhs, Buddhists, Hindus, Native Americans, and New Age believers.
The huge interest that he garnered led to the establishment of more than a
dozen spiritual centers of the tariqa across North America. Sheikh Nazim
made subsequent visits to the United States and Canada in 1993, 1996 and
1998 where he established and inaugurated more centers of the tariqa. It
was particularly in North America that he found steady and vast followers,
which padded his reputation as a spiritual master throughout the world.

3.5 Tariqa Naqshbandi-Haqqani Singapore (NHS)

In 1991, Ustaz Syed Hasan Bahara, a Singaporean, made his visit to Cyprus
to meet with Sheikh Nazim and Sheikh Hisham. He attained permission
from Sheikh Nazim to carry out the Naqshbandi-Haqqani dzikr and
conducted the sessions at the Abdul Aleem Sidiqque mosque. Membership started to increase but not at a significant rate. In the year
1996, Sheikh Hisham visited Singapore for the first time and met with
Sheikh Zakaria, a Singaporean, whose father was the grand-Sheikh of the Qadirii tariqa in Singapore. He then gave bay’ab to Sheikh Zakaria and appointed him as his representative (khalifah) for the local zawiyah. Since Sheikh Zakaria’s leadership, membership saw rapid increase. In 1998, there were 30 core members and today the number has increased five-fold to 150 core members, and counting.

The tariqa meets every Thursday night at Masjid Kampong Siglap for their weekly dzikir sessions. Once in four weeks it will be held at the Masjid Hajah Fatimah. The need for association is of extreme importance to the NHS, “Our way is association”. “Association” refers to frequent meetings with members of the tariqa to practice the rituals of the tariqa. A respondent (M3) revealed that Sheikh Nazim said that to “associate” is more important than to conduct their daily dzikir individually. As the saying goes, “One has to fulfill one’s obligation to associate even if one is ill and crawling”. The weekly dzikir is held after isya’ till late. A regular dzikir session lasts for approximately 40 minutes and end with a mini lecture (sohbat) that is usually conducted by Sheikh Zakaria in English. Women and men sit in separate circles. In dressing, most are donned in long white gowns (jubah). The men also put on elaborate headgears that symbolize each one’s stage (maqamat) of learning.

21 While Ustaz Syed Hasan Bahara has taken on the backseat, he still leads a small dzikir group every Tuesday at the Maqam Habib Noh, a famous Sufi shrine in Singapore.
Aside the weekly dzikir, each member is required to carry out his daily prescribed practices, made up of chants in praise of Allah and the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). They are also to visit the online portal at sufilive.net to listen to the sohbats. The online portal is public and does not require a password. It provides a comprehensive exposition of the requirements of the tariqa. It is maintained and constantly updated from its headquarters in the United States. My primary respondent revealed that it requires up to 7000 USD a week to maintain the portal and 30,000 USD a month to maintain all of the facilities in the United States alone. Public travels of Sheikh Nazim and Sheikh Hisham are recorded and updated for public consumption. There is also a section on online bay’ab that allows people to pledge their allegiance digitally.

3.4.1 Levels of membership

Respondents suggested that the local zawiyah has three levels of membership. These levels, envisioned as concentric circles gravitate around Sheikh Zakaria, the local representative of the tariqa, also known as the khalifah. The three levels are differentiated according to the levels of awrad (spiritual practices), which are obligatory upon the followers. The innermost circle consists of advanced members of the tariqa. Referred to as murids, they form the core circle of allegiance. They are distinguished as

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22 See Appendix Three. The Naqshbandi Haqqani Singapore has published a handy 4-faced card which has details of the “daily adab”, “daily wurd”, “silsilah tariqa”, “17 bad traits” and other information of their practice.

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avid practitioners of the *tariqa*, often performing supplementary deeds above and beyond the general prescription. They also act as right hand personnel to the *khalifah* and perform the role of administrator and organizer of the local *zawiyah*. My primary respondent, who belongs to the innermost circle, is the President of the Naqshbandi Haqqani Singapore *zawiyah*. As President, he enjoys a close relationship with Sheikh Zakaria, whose spiritual title precedes his own. He also enjoys a close relationship with Sheikh Hisham and has accompanied him on his regional visits on a number of occasions. He also publishes posters, flyers and handouts of the Naqshbandi Haqqani *tariqa* and acts as liaison officer to other Naqshbandi Haqqani *zawiyahs* across the region. According to him, the inner core of *murids* consists of 50 odd members. They are those who will attend every session unconditionally and in whose regeneration and revitalization of the *tariqa* is ensured.

The second circle consists of intermediate members of the *tariqa*. They are referred to as *muhib/musta'id* or lovers of the *tariqa*. Most of them have taken the *bay'ah* and will afford time to attend the weekly association sessions. They are also moderate practitioners of the *tariqa*, often performing the standard prescription of daily and weekly deeds. In addition, they do not take up any administrative role of managing and maintaining the *tariqa*. In the event of a visit from Sheikh Nazim or Sheikh Hisham, they do not hesitate to volunteer their time and services. They are also those who will be invited to intimate sessions with Sheikh Nazim or
Sheikh Hisham, differentiating them from the general public. The intermediate circle has the highest number of people, approximating at over a 100.

The third and outermost circle consists of beginner members of the *tariqa*. They are referred to as *mubtadi’i* since they love the *tariqa* but do not follow the prescriptions of the *tariqa*. They attend the weekly association sessions occasionally. Some of them have taken the *bay’ah* while most have not. They are those who prefer the lowest commitment to the *tariqa*. During major events, such as when Sheikh Nazim or Sheikh Hisham visits the *zawiyah*, they are sure to attend these sessions. They could also be those who have overlapping membership with other *tariqas* and prefer to maintain a loose affiliation to the Naqshbandi Haqqani.

Envisioned as concentric circles with a centrifugal node, the *tariqa* diminishes in influence as it moves away from the centre. While each layer of the *zawiyah* possesses different dynamics, the appeal to fraternity is keener than ever. A respondent revealed that there lies a shared sense of belonging to a community of faithful.

The nature of communal worship is fundamental to all organized religion. Durkheim theorized that society is bound either by mechanical or organic solidarity, the more complex a society is the more it will tend towards the latter. Mechanical solidarity is commonly found in traditional societies
where a high degree of homogeneity of function can be observed, it is a community bounded by kinship ties and is prevalent in small-scale societies. On the other hand, organic solidarity is achieved through a higher degree of heterogeneity and inter-dependence among individuals in society. The complex society of modern life requires a greater level of specialization and division of labour among individuals. Although the need for inter-dependence heightens, dependence is functional rather than emotional. As such, Durkheim speaks of anomie in the modern world where the individual’s psycho-social needs are not addressed. A respondent (M6) mentioned that the tariqa provides him with

“a feeling of security and belongingness. I feel comfort as I have my brothers who share my experiences and we are connected very strongly in our hearts to one another.”

Another respondent (M4) mentioned;

“living in the world today there are many people that we cannot trust and that it is very stressful to always be wary. In the tariqa, there is common trust that everyone shares as we are tied together with the Sheikh.”

Viewed in this way, religion serves a greater function now in the modern world than ever. This is so as its closed and shared network of brotherhood inducts the individual into a larger community and expands his or her sense of belonging.
CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 *Tariqas* as social movements

This section seeks to account for the contemporary revival of Sufism through the case of the Naqshbandi Haqqani *tariqa*. Recent attempts fall short of a systematic framework of analysis. Therefore, this study aims to situate the analysis of the Naqshbandi Haqqani *tariqa* within a social movement organization (SMO) framework. The definition of an SMO is as disparate as its many varieties in the field suggest. For one, the notion of an SMO always brings to mind the idea of political mobilization. Tarrow (1994) defines social movements as “collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interactions with elites, opponents and authorities” while Tilly (2004) defines social movements as “a series of contentious performances, displays and campaigns by which ordinary people made collective claims on others”. In both definitions, the process of political mobilization is apparent. Yet, since the term was first conceived, it has extended to encapsulate, most if not all forms of collectivities that share a purpose, most often than not determined by a certain type of worldview and aspiration towards change.

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23 The conceptualization of sufi brotherhoods or *tariqas* as social movements is not novel. In tracing the history of *tariqas*, Lapidus (1997) noted that a “religious-based community organization” was built around Sufism as Sufi masters consolidated more disciples when the group structure of Sufism progressively consolidated in the course of the 10th and 11th centuries in the form of socio-religious movements.
In appreciating a broad and inclusive definition to social movements, I find Aberle’s (1966) contribution to be useful\textsuperscript{24}. Aberle suggests that there are 4 types of social movements based on two characteristics. These two characteristics are; 1) who is the movement attempting to change (specific individuals or everyone) and; 2) how much change is advocated (limited or radical). His model suggests that there are four social movement types and they are 1) alternative social movements (limited and to specific individuals); 2) redemptive social movements (radical and to specific individuals); 3) reformative social movements (limited and to everyone) and; 4) revolutionary social movements (radical and to everyone). Based on Aberle, the Naqshbandi Haqqani tariqa approximates closest to a redemptive social movement, one that seeks to affect radical change to specific individuals. Redemptive social movements are typical of religious movements which advocate a transformed change in the individual it is set to target. In this case, it seeks a comprehensive lifestyle change.

Social movement organization literature suggests that there are several factors that can determine the success (or otherwise) of the SMO. This study seeks to look into two important factors and they are 1) opportunity structures and; 2) framing processes. Opportunity structures refer to the

\textsuperscript{24} Social movement theory and literature has developed over time. For example, since the mid-1960s, theorists had conceptualized ‘New Social Movement’ (NSM) theory to explain the radical break of form and substance from social movements of the past. In recent times, ‘Internetworked Social Movement’ (ISM) theory has also been proposed to account for networks and movements through cyber space. In locating a suitable conceptual frame to explain the tariqas, I found it more productive to reference a broad and inclusive framework, such as Aberle’s model, which is an overarching framework sufficient enough to encompass the varieties of social movement theories.
availability of avenues and processes that enable and enhance the progress of a particular movement. Most SMO literature emphasize, “political opportunity structures” focusing on the availability of “a set of formal and informal political conditions that encourage, discourage, channel, and otherwise affect movement activity” (Campbell in Davis et. al., 2005: 44). Goodwin and Jasper (1999) in their critique of political process theory, in particular its emphasis on political opportunity structures contend that “culture shapes framing processes as well as political opportunities” (in Benford & Snow, 2000: 629). They suggest that the cultural material most relevant to movement framing processes include “the extant stock of meanings, beliefs, ideologies, practices, values, myths, narratives” (ibid) prevalent in the society at the time. This suggests that the success of a social movement greatly depends on the existing cultural norms of the day.

The analysis of the Naqshbandi Haqqani tariqa focuses on “cultural opportunity structures” which is the “cultural context in which movement activity is embedded”. Noakes and Johnston (2005) suggest that “potential constituents (of a social movement) are more likely to embrace a frame that draws on beliefs and values that make up part of the target group’s cultural tool kit” (14). The “cultural compatibility” of a social movement in a society affects the extent of “resonance” between the movement and potential adherents, “the cultural synchrony of these symbols increases the resonance of the collective action frames they help to constitute” (ibid, 16).
I argue that a salient factor that accounts for the rise in the membership of the Naqshbandi Haqqani tariqa is the availability of cultural opportunity structures promoting its growth. The trajectory of growth and development of the tariqa traces itself back to the late 20th century when Sheikh Nazim Haqqani sent his protégé Sheikh Hisham Kabbani to the United States to spread the Naqshbandi Haqqani teachings there. The United States in the late 20th century saw the mushrooming of New Age spiritualities and a renewed interest in mysticism across most religious traditions. As such, the Naqshbandi Haqqani was able to gain from the spiritual ferment that was present at the time. The Naqshbandi Haqqani was able to saddle on the backs of an accelerated thriving mass of interest in spiritualities by positioning itself in a complementary position. In doing so it was able to legitimize its concerns and aspirations in line with concerns of the wider society. I argue that the entry of the Naqshbandi Haqqani at such an opportune time contributed to its accelerated growth in the United States and North America at large, which subsequently aided its expansion and growth throughout the rest of the world including in Singapore.

4.2 Rise in world spiritualities

In recent times, one observes a contemporary vitality in spirituality across most societies throughout the world (Roof, 1995; Wuthnow, 2007). Nowhere is this more obvious than in the United States. The spiritual
explosion experienced in the US has been described by commentators as constituting a “marketplace” (Roof, 1999). The free market religious economy of the United States has showcased a bevy of new religious movements, most of which are steeped in spirituality. Roof (1999) deduced that the “baby boomers” generation has contributed to the rekindled interest in religion and theology. Wuthnow (2007) on the other hand, focused his analysis on post “baby-boomers” i.e. those who are in the 20s and 30s, and show how they are significantly affecting the religious canvas of America.

The religious resurgence attributable to Roof’s “seekers” and Wuthnow’s “tinkerers” is significant in their move away from traditional, institutional religions to more fluid, experiential types of religious experience. Roof (1999) suggests that “a great variety of terms now signal the shift in the center of religious energy: inwardness, subjectivity, the experiential, the expressive, the spiritual” (7). The general spirit of curiosity and interest in these types of religious orientation is nowhere better represented than in a typical bookstore where “popular topics such as angels, Sufism, journey, recovery, meditation, magic, inspiration, Judaica, astrology, gurus, Bible, prophecy, Evangelicalism, Mary, Buddhism, Catholicism, esoterica and the like are in abundance” (7, italics mine).

This emphasis on spirituality is a relatively new phenomenon. In the early 1960s, “the word spiritual was conspicuously absent in the public arena”
It was by the late 1960s and early 1970s, following social and cultural transformations in the US where the discourse on spirituality gained momentum. This interest followed through well into the 21st century and is not showing any signs of dissipating. With the rapid rise of new religious and spiritual movements, the interest in mystical traditions across all religions has been rekindled.

Sheikh Nazim’s eventual entry into North America succeeded in stages. During the 1950s to 1970s, in his visits to Syria, Cyprus, Jordan and Turkey, he encouraged people to “leave atheism, secularism and materialism and to come back to God” (Kabbani in Damrel, 2006: 116). In the year 1973, Sheikh Daghestani, spiritual mentor to Sheikh Nazim, died. It was in the same year that the latter received permission “from the Prophet Muhammad to spread the light of Islam into the European countries” (ibid) upon when, he pursued his travels to London. Subsequently, his opportune entry and success in North America was greatly aided by his protégé and son-in-law, Sheikh Hisham. In 1990 Sheikh Hisham relocated to the US;

“Foreseeing the great spiritual hunger of people in the Western Hemisphere, Syakh Nazim assigned his representative and deputy, Syakh Muhammad Hisham Kabbani of Lebanon, to reside and teach Islam and the mystical Naqshbandi Haqqani Sufi path in North and South America” (in Damrel, 2006: 117).

A year later, in 1991, Syakh Nazim made his first travel to North America. His entry was timely, as it was a period when interest in spirituality had
gained critical mass. He was 70 years of age when he traveled to more than 15 states meeting with people of diverse backgrounds and religious beliefs including Muslims, Christians, Jews, Sikhs, Buddhists, Hindus, Native Americans, and New Age believers. The huge interest that he garnered led to the establishment of more than a dozen spiritual centers of the *tariqa* across North America. Syakh Nazim made subsequent visits to the United States and Canada in 1993, 1996 and 1998 when he established and inaugurated more centers of the *tariqa*. To date, four non-profit organizations headed by Sheikh Hisham has been set up; 1) the Haqqani Sufi Foundation; 2) the As-Sunna Foundation of America (ASFA); 3) Kamilat Muslim Women’s Organization; and 4) the Islamic Supreme Council of America (ISCA). Sheikh Hisham is reported to have brought over 60,000 Americans to Islam and has led over 20,000 Muslim immigrants to America to embrace Naqshbandi teachings.

The consistent interest and vigour in Sufism has earned him steady and vast followers particularly in North America, which padded his reputation as a spiritual master throughout the world. His success in North America, particularly in the United States, served as a launch pad for his reception in other countries. The Islamic Supreme Council of America suggests that Sheikh Nazim is responsible for “the spiritual well being of over 2 million followers around the world”. Based in the US, the Naqshbandi Haqqani
has established zawiyahs and a network of believers across the globe. Nielsen et al (2003) focused their study on what they have identified as the “transnational” nature of the Naqshbandi Haqqani tariqa. They have rightly observed that the tariqa has “under the direction of its present Sheikh, extended its membership to many countries and has possibly one of the largest and most diverse international membership of any Sufi tariqa” (74).

The heightened interest in spirituality in the US has spawned similar movements across the world. This attests to rising global networks of faiths whose interconnectedness ensures that religious trends are no longer confined to the locale. It is of great significance that the tariqa Naqshbandi Haqqani pioneered its movement into the US at the heyday of the buzz of spirituality. Its opportune entry, miraculous to most of its followers, gained from the steady appeal of spirituality during the late 20th century.

The entry into the spiritual religious market of the US provided the tariqa with suitable opportunity structures to further its purpose. The Naqshbandi Haqqani was able to ride on existing languages of spirituality and New Age faddism that was rife throughout the continent, especially so in the urban areas. This trend was not merely contained within the Americas but was also prevalent in Europe. In fact, Nielsen et al reports that in Glastonbury, England, “the talks at the monthly meeting tend to minimize explicitly Islamic language, preferring vocabulary of ‘energy’,

25 See Appendix Four for a graphical representation of Naqshbandi Haqqani zawiyahs around the world.
‘breathing in light’ and ‘taking in the Divine’, which is often more associated with new religious movements and New Age (85). This clearly demonstrates the success of the tarīqa who managed to couch its language with that of contemporary spiritualities, even that which found inspiration outside of the Islamic tradition. In this case, its strategies of adaptation simultaneously provided followers with the centrality of Islamic teachings as well as the familiarity of local contemporary practices. It is no wonder then, that a substantial portion of the tarīqa’s followers in the Americas and Europe are recent converts to Islam or are even non-Muslims.

Where the case of the Singapore zabiyah is concerned, it was in the year 1991 when Ustaz Syed Hasan Bahara first visited Sheikh Nazim in Cyprus. Upon attaining permission to carry out the Naqshbandi-Haqqani dzikr in Singapore, he convened with interested followers at the Abdul Aleem Sidique mosque. Yet, during his leadership, the number of followers remained modest. It was only after Sheikh Hisham’s first visit to Singapore in 1996 when membership started to pick up. Sheikh Hisham appointed Sheikh Zakaria to lead the zabiyah in Singapore and by that transferred local leadership onto the care of Sheikh Zakaria. The double entry of the Naqshbandi Haqqani and its eventual success the second time round needs examination. Respondents attribute it mainly to Sheikh Zakaria’s character. He is described as charismatic, people-friendly and engaging. It is also of importance that he is conversant in the English language, having lived abroad for a substantial part of his life. They claim
that Sheikh Hisham’s choice in Sheikh Zakaria is nothing less than divine wisdom since membership started to increase incrementally upon his leadership. Additionally, Sheikh Hisham’s personal visit, carrying the weight as protégé to Syakh Nazim, was of powerful impact.

However, of greater significance was that in 1996 Sheikh Hisham was well underway in his mission in the United States and the effect of this would have snowballed to the region, particularly to Singapore. This points to the salience of the availability of opportunity structures which the tariqa benefitted from. The \textit{tariqa} was able to engage in frame bridging so as to couch its concerns congruent to a global phenomenon and in so doing establish strong resonance among its followers. In doing so, it was able to profit upon its momentum in the United States and carry forth this momentum to other parts of the world, in this case Singapore.

\textbf{4.3 Framing tariqa post 9/11}

Aside the availability of opportunity structures, the success of a social movement also depends on the successful establishment of collective action frames. A frame is an “interpretative schema that simplifies and condenses the ‘world out there’ by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action” (Snow and Benford, 1998: 137), thus organizing experience and guiding action by “rendering events or occurrences meaningful” (Snow et. al. 1986: 464).
This concept is extended in social movements’ theoretical literature to suggest that a prerequisite of any kind of movement participation requires a “frame alignment” process.

Frame alignment refers to “the linkage of individual and SMO interpretive orientations, such that some set of individual interests, values and beliefs and SMO activities, goals, and ideology are congruent and complementary” (ibid: 464). Snow et. al. (1986) goes on to suggest that there are 4 types of frame alignment processes and they are; (a) frame bridging; (b) frame amplification; (c) frame extension and; (d) frame transformation. These processes are not necessarily chronological. They are case-specific and some processes may be more important than others depending on the type and intensity of the movements. Yet, all SMOs require the frame alignment process to one degree or another and among others, the success (or otherwise) of the SMO depends greatly on whether “frame resonance” is established. The higher the degree of resonance, the more successful will the SMO be. Benford & Snow (2000) suggest that collective action frames are constructed in part as “movement adherents negotiate a shared understanding of some problematic condition or situation they define as in need of change, make attributions regarding who or what is to blame, articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and urge others to act in concert to affect change” (615).
I argue that a salient factor that accounts for the rise in the membership of the Naqshbandi Haqqani tariqa is through its strategies of frame alignment. The Naqshbandi Haqqani succeeded in bridging their concerns against post-9/11 and the phenomenon of terror in the contemporary world. Snow et. al. (1986) has identified this process as “frame bridging” which refers to “the linkage of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem” (468).

The fate of tariqa took on a remarkable turn at the start of the new millennium. The September 11 attacks on the United States propelled Islam into the limelight, frequently one coloured by a negative hue. Consequently, a surge of responses from Muslims came forth to distance themselves and the religion from acts of terrorism motivated by political Islamist ideologies. They stress that violence and the idea of the Islamic state was never condoned by and is antithetical to the religion. They stress that the public and non-Muslims in particular, needed to be educated regarding the difference between the acts of terrorists and Islam, the faith of millions.

If Islam only preached goodness, yet deplorable acts were done in the name of the faith, this came down to differences among Muslims and orientations within Islam. Subsequently, appendages to the primary
identifier of Muslim i.e. liberal Muslim, moderate Muslim, extremist Muslim, fundamental Muslim etc; came into fashion.\(^\text{26}\)

4.3.1 Struggle for the “soul of Islam”

The aftermath of the 9/11 attacks saw a heightened surveillance of Muslims in Singapore. This was exacerbated by the arrest of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) members whose plans to attack several key embassies and a Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) station were exposed and foiled. Immediately after, the government led calls for restraint among both Muslims and non-Muslims in the interest of social cohesion. It was repeatedly stressed that the actions of the terrorists were not representative of Singaporean Muslims, rather it was a result of a distinctive group of radicals who mutated Islamic teachings to justify their violent actions. Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong in his address to the Council of Foreign Relations in 2004 recognized the ideological nature of terrorism stressing that,

“Just as the Cold War was an ideological as well as a geopolitical struggle, the war against terrorism must be fought with ideas as well as with armies; with religious and community leaders as well as police forces and intelligence services. This ideological struggle is already upon us”\(^\text{27}\)

\(^\text{26}\) These labels, which are not new, are given renewed significance post September 11. Shepard (1987) in his typology of Islamic ideologies plotted them according to two scales - modernity on the vertical axis and Islamic totalism on the horizontal axis. According to his typology, “radical Islamism” ranked the highest on both scales. Radical Islamism is characterized by the “claim that Islam is for all aspects of social and personal life” (9). They also agree with the modernists that Islam need to be rid of un-Islamic superstitions and emphasize the need to put sharia into practice. Among those identified as radical Islamists are the likes of Sayid Quth, Mawdudi and Khomeini.

He went on to state that the ideological struggle is for Muslims to wrangle among themselves,

“This ideological struggle is far more complex than the struggle against communism because it engages not just reason but religious faith. You and I as non-Muslims have no locus standi to engage in this struggle for the soul of Islam. It is a matter for Muslims to settle among themselves”\textsuperscript{28}.

So unravels the discourse towards the “struggle for the soul of Islam”, which is not a particularly new issue but was entrenched as a result of current events and most significantly, elevated to the level of national importance.

4.3.2 Discourses and gatekeepers

Azhar (2008) identified 4 broad strands of thinking and discourses within the Singapore Malay Muslim community and they are (a) religious traditionalism, (b) dakwah revivalism, (c) religious reformism, and (d) Sufi spiritualism\textsuperscript{29}. In detailing these types of discourses, Azhar maintained that there exists “discourses that are present and notably favoured, but also those that are absent and possibly not favoured” (83). He also noted that the “(under) development of certain discourses, is conditioned not so much by their strength and viability, but by “gatekeepers” who determine

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{29} Short of it conflating religious devotional attitudes and religious political mobilization, it is nevertheless a useful paradigm to approximate existing discourses.
the setting and tone of discourse on Islam locally” (84). September 11’s resultant gaze upon Islam has marshaled these varying discourses into the limelight for closer scrutiny.

The conservative practice of Islam in the region came under rapid fire for its disproportionate emphasis on legalism. This is coupled by the influence of purist Wahabbi thought whose impact was felt since the 20th century, which promotes an austere form of experiencing the religion, one that is fixated on eliminating “bid'ah” from the repertoire of Islamic practices, rituals and culture. Its militant disapproval of practices such as *maulid*, *dzikr* and *kenduri* to name a few, lambasting them as non-Islamic cultural variants, promoted an overly critical, purist and inhibited experience of the religion. However, it will be premature and erroneous to deduce that this orientation has or will lead to militancy. As Senior Minister Goh rightly noted,

“Southeast Asian Muslims have also in recent years been exposed to the austere Wahhabi religion coming out from Saudi Arabia. But this is reflected more in the religious character of the Muslim population. It has not made them more radical”\(^{30}\)

Nonetheless, the unflinchingly puritanical nature of Wahhabism made itself an attractive target of criticism as it was seen to be a potent fodder for radicalism. Among their critics were *tariqa* members who blamed the opposition of *tariqas* since the mid-20th century on the Wahhabis, who claim that *tariqa* practices were a distortion of Islam or *bid'ah*. For the

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Sufis, the present climate of terror had presented them with the opportunity structures to frame the Sufistic orientation as dialectical to the Wahabbis. In the language of popular framing, the Sufis called upon the virtue of love and the wisdom of inclusion. Capitalizing on the reputation of the Wahabbis as puritanical, unflinching and dissident, the Sufis presented themselves as accommodating, spiritual and inclusionary. In fact, an unpublished poster that I found in the office of my primary respondent iconically captured the essence of this ideological struggle.31 The Sufis called for love and compassion but mostly stressed the need for individual rehabilitation with the oft-quoted wisdom, “the health of the society begins with the soul of the individual”.

4.3.3 Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG)

In addition, the September 11 incident and the nervous alarm it set off led to an intensification of the gaze upon the Malay/Muslim Singaporean community. The State did not waste any time to act and immediately called on esteemed Malay/Muslim community leaders to aid in the immediate prescription of the issue. In 2003, the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) was set up. It is made up of a group of volunteers among religious leaders in Singapore. Their specific role is to counsel JI detainees towards rehabilitation. Beyond that they also hope to “serve as an expert resource group towards understanding Islam in relation to any

31 See Appendix Five for a representation of the poster found at my respondent’s office.
misconceptions and misinterpretations of the religion as propagated by the terrorists”\textsuperscript{32}. As at 2008, the RRG has over 30 asatizahs and has collectively conducted over 1000 counselling sessions for JI detainees and their families.

Understood as an ideological problem, the battle against the “ideology of terror” as propagated by political Islamist groups such as JI and Al-Qaeda is shored upon the shoulders of these asatizahs in the RRG. MM Lee and DPM S Jayakumar stressed the importance of Muslim religious leaders in countering the threat of terrorism. MM Lee mentioned,

> “Because they were motivated by a religious creed which is based on their misinterpretation of the Quran, either they were taught by their leaders or read from the Internet or whatever. We have to get people who can speak with authority to counter that” (in Saat et. al., 2008).

DPM S Jayakumar chimed,

> “…the Religious Rehabilitation Group’s (RRG) role in Singapore’s national security efforts is a particularly important one because the fight against misconstrued ideology is one that is best done by that community’s religious teachers and scholars themselves” (ibid).

The RRG counsels detainees through 4 steps: 1) extricate their negatively imbibed ideologies; 2) replace their negative ideology with positive ones; 3) input rightful Islamic knowledge in them and; 4) exemplify the fulfilling ways of living in a multi religious multi racial society such as Singapore’s\textsuperscript{33}.


The battle with ideas is not unlike the nation’s battle with communism as MM Lee opines that the current threat is all the more dangerous (than communism) since their actions can be justified through reference to the Qur’an,

“That (communism) is just an ideology. This is a religion, it is deep-seated. They can quote the Qur’an to justify what they are doing. That is our problem.” (in Saat et. al., 2008: 48).

The problem as they acknowledge it is in the misunderstanding and misappropriation of religious terms among which the concept of bay’ah, which is also used in tariqa circles. While the diagnosis of the problem focuses on ideas, it has the effect of masking other structural issues on hand. It also has the effect of insulating the problem of terrorism within the confines of the religion and exclusively so as a religious problem has to be tackled by religious leaders.

The co-chairpersons of the RRG committee, Ustaz Ali and Ustaz Hasbi are local leaders of tariqa groups. Ustaz Ali, is the local leader of the tariqa Qadirri wa Naqshbandi who holds their meetings at the Khadijah mosque. Ustaz Hasbi is the local leader of the tariqa Ahmadi Iddrisiyyah. A couple of others are also active tariqa members such as Ustaz Ibrahim who is the local leader of the tariqa Qadirri wa Chisti and Ustaz TM Fouzy who is a firm supporter of Sufism and tariqa. Ustaz Mohamed Ali, who is a key member of the RRG, mentioned that the extremist ideology “is well outside Islam’s mainstream Sunni, Shiite and Sufi traditions” (129).
The act of juxtaposition unwittingly projects an antithetical image of Sufism and extremism, while confusing devotional attitudes and political mobilization. Sufism serves as an antidote to radicalism and fundamentalism. Its rhetoric on purifying the soul and to feel peace with oneself is seen to be the best counter against angry political dogmas. For example, Ustaz Mohamed Ghouse Khan Surattee, a member of the RRG, stressed that

“the best way of acquiring religious knowledge is by learning from teachers who are blessed with the uninterrupted links right up to Rasulullah S.A.W….the most important bases for such a tradition is the transmission of spiritual wisdom and blessing (barakah) from master to pupil which promises the purity and integrity of religion” (150).

Sympathies to Sufism and tariqa are well exemplified through these asatizahs and their teachings, the sanad (chain of knowledge transmission) is a pedagogical practice which accords due respect to figures of authority above and beyond oneself and inevitably presumes a deferential attitude to learning. The institutionalization of a community-based counseling support group against radicalism, highlighted the function of Sufism. This resulted in the increased visibility of Sufism and tariqa in the public domain, thus enhancing the opportunity structures available for the flourish of tariqa as a social movement.

34 One cannot dismiss the irony here, as the Sufis of regional history were armed against the Dutch colonial powers and had organized a violent rebellion against them.
35 This is characteristic of the tariqa but is not exclusive to it.
36 This could be further divulged through the RRG counseling manual entitled, “Islam Agama Salam dan Damai: Langkah Hayati Erti Jihad Sebenar” (Salutation of Peace: The Path towards Enliving the Real Jihad). It was developed in 2003 and was put to use by RRG.
4.3.4 United against a common enemy

The Naqshbandi Haqqani tariqa’s hardline stance against terrorism is well-known and often heralded as exemplary of Muslim organizations. They have also been extremely vocal against Wahhabism with Sheikh Hisham Kabbani in the year 1991 controversially declaring that most mosques in America are of extreme Wahhabi influence. Conversations with respondents reveal that most share hardline sentiments against the terrorist attacks perpetrated in the name of Islam. Discussing the local JI detainees in particular, some express sympathies as they viewed the detainees as victims of fiery political pundits masked as religious clerics. Most opine that the mis-education of the victims is symptomatic of the contemporary experience of Islam.

One respondent (F2) mentioned that since the mid-20th century on, Islam in this region has become “soulless” and that the pathological fixation on rules and regulations has warped the true meaning of Islam.
“Our religion has been hijacked by these people today. They preach hate when Islam is supposed to be about love – love your neighbours, love your family members, love yourself, love your fellow Muslims and show respect to the non-Muslims. Today everything is about halal and haram and neraka and doha. It is sad. Today a child is not chided for not giving up his seat to an old man on the train for example but is chided if he missed his hair while taking wudhu.”

Most, if not all respondents, particularly mentioned the ill-effects of Wahabbism and its damaging tendencies, while recalling the destruction of revered tombs in Mecca. It appears that a direct connection is made between the rise of Islamist terrorists and the influence of Wahabbi thought. No matter how uncertain or erroneous these correlations may be, respondents are unanimous on Sufism as the antidote.

Bearing in mind the volatile history of Sufism and tariqa in the region, respondents allude to the triumph of Sufism over their prolonged detractors. It is fascinating to witness how recent world events have impacted the experience of Sufism in the region, as it rises yet again from its ashes, united against the myth of a common enemy. In essence, the successful framing of the phenomenon of terror in the modern world intensified by its closeness to home and the subsequent formation of the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) provided the “opportunity structures” for the flourish of Sufism and tariqa in Singapore today.
CHAPTER FIVE

The ability of frames to resonate with potential adherents is extremely crucial in determining the success of any social movement. An essential conduit for frame resonance is the “frame articulator” who in most cases is the social movement entrepreneur. For the Naqshbandi Haqqani, this role is played by Sheikh Nazim. As suggested by Noakes and Johnston (2005), “the primary role of the social movement entrepreneur is to communicate the movement’s frames to current and potential constituents” (8). Bearing in mind the prime role of the social movement entrepreneur, Snow and Benford (1992) suggest that one of the factors that will affect the degree of frame resonance is the “credibility of the frame’s promoters”. Having established such, this section shall focus on analyzing the role of the Sheikh. The Naqshbandi Haqqani tariqa’s existence pivots upon the figure of the Sheikh – Sheikh Nazim Adil al-Haqqani. His credibility and influence is paramount in determining the extent of the tariqa’s success. Following right after him is his protégé and imminent successor Sheikh Hisham Kabbani.

This section seeks to explore the concept of “frame articulator” and “frame resonance” to analyze the role of the Sheikh as a charismatic figure of authority. To date, the literature on social movement organizations has yet to place a strong emphasis on the role of the charismatic leader in influencing a movement’s directions. This exercise seeks to address the
gap and argues that Sheikh Nazim is the most important factor determining the success of the tariqa. Herein, I will explore Weber’s varied concepts of authority with a focus on the charismatic type. I would argue that the concept of charismatic authority is insufficient without complementing its analysis with Weber’s concept of the prophet. To the extent that the charismatic figure transforms into a prophet will signal the admission of “frame resonance”.

5.1 Authority and prophecy

The secrets of the Path lie with the Sheikh. He is the abode, the sanctuary and the vessel of Truth. If a graphical representation denoting the levels of authority and influence of the tariqa is drawn, it will show concentric circles with a centrifugal node. The node, occupied by the current living master, is the prime source of bountiful charisma and absolute authority. On reflection of the role of Sheikh Nazim, a respondent (M1) suggests “He (Sheikh Nazim) is the reason for the tariqa as he is blessed by Allah and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)”.

Weber (1993) delineated 3 types of authority and they are; 1) traditional; 2) charismatic and; 3) legal-rational. These types of authority differ from one another through the nature of their legitimations. Legitimations are “the moral vocabularies of those who speak with the voice of authority” (77). Weber says that all people in authority “concoct myths about their own
superiority and natural fitness to rule” to justify their political propriety (ibid). These typologies remain as ideal-types and according to Weber “All three types of domination occur in various combinations throughout different periods of history” (in Parkin, 2002: 86).

Among Weber’s 3 types of authority, charismatic authority is the hardest to conceptualize (Wallis, 1993; Friedland, 1964). This is so since, unlike traditional or legal-rational, charismatic authority is pivotal upon the individual personality. Following Weber (in Parkin, 2002), charismatic authority “rests upon the personal magnetism of an heroic figure, someone who possesses the gift of grace” (77). The authority of the charismatic leader is dependent solely on his ability to convince his followers and disciples of his extraordinary powers. Therefore, he must always be ready to demonstrate his gifts through awe-inspiring acts or risk forfeiting the faith of his disciples.

Accounts of Sheikh Nizam are replete with miraculous stories. As early as his childhood he was identified as a special child with special qualities,

“During his childhood in Cyprus he sat with his grandfather, who was a Shaykh of the Qadiri Tariqat, to learn its discipline and its spirituality. Extraordinary signs appeared early in him. His conduct was perfect: he never fought nor argued with anyone. He was always smiling and patient. His grandfather from his father’s side and his grandfather from his mother's side trained him for the spiritual path... From the age of five there were times when his mother couldn't find him. After searching, she would find him either in the mosque or at the grave of Umm ul-Hiram (r), a Companion of the Prophet (s) whose grave has a mosque built next to it. Tourists come to her grave in large numbers, attracted by the
spectacle of a rock suspended in space above her grave. When his mother would try to bring him home, he would say, "Leave me here with Umm ul-Hiram, she is one of our ancestors." He was often seen speaking to Umm ul-Hiram, who was buried fourteen centuries ago, listening and then speaking, listening and answering, as if having a conversation with her. Whenever anyone would disturb him, he would say, "Leave me, I am speaking with my grandmother who is in this grave." 37

As a youth, he studied secular knowledge and majored in Chemical Engineering at the University of Istanbul. He was an excellent student yet the attraction of the religious sciences coupled with his high spiritual station ensured that he pursued its path. As a youth he recalls,

"There I received great blessings and great peace in my heart. I always prayed the Dawn Prayer in that mosque (Sultan Ahmed mosque, Istanbul) with my two Shaykhs, Shaykh Jamaluddin al-Alasuni and Shaykh Sulayman Arzarumi. They were educating me and putting in my heart the spiritual knowledge. I had many visions during that time, drawing me to go to the Holy Land of Damascus, but I didn't yet have permission from my Shaykh. Many times in my visions, through Self-Effacement, I saw the Prophet Muhammad calling me to his presence. There was a deep yearning in my heart to leave everything and to migrate to the Holy City of the Prophet.

"One day, when this longing in my heart was particularly intense, I saw a vision in which my Shaykh, Sulayman Arzarumi, came, shook me by the shoulder, and told me, 'Now the permission has come. Your secrets and your trust and your spiritual guidance are not with me. I only held you as a trust until you were ready for your real Shaykh, who is also my Shaykh, Shaykh `Abdullah ad-Daghestani. He is holding your keys. So go to him in Sham. This permission comes from me and from the Prophet. '" [Shaykh Sulayman Arzarumi was one of the 313 saints of the Naqshbandi Order, who stand in the footsteps of and represent the 313 messengers.]

"That vision ended, and with it I had received the permission to move to Sham. I looked for my Shaykh to tell him about that vision. I found him coming to the mosque after about two hours. I ran to him. He opened his arms and said to me, 'My son, are you happy with your vision?' Then I knew that he knew everything that had happened. He said, 'Don't wait. Direct yourself to Sham.' He didn't give me an address or any other information, except the name, Shaykh `Abdullah ad-Daghestani, in Sham. I traveled from Istanbul to Aleppo by train, where I stayed some time. While there I would go from one to mosque to another, praying, sitting with scholars and spending time in worship and meditation.

"Then I travelled to Hama, which, like Aleppo, is a very ancient city. I tried to move on to Sham, but it was impossible. The French, who occupied Sham, were preparing for an attack by the English. So I traveled to Homs to the grave of Sayiddina Khalid ibn Walid (r), a Companion of the Prophet. I visited Khalid ibn Walid (r) and then I went into the mosque and prayed. A servant came to me and said, 'I saw a dream last night in which the Prophet came to me. He said, 'One of my grandsons is coming here tomorrow. Take care of him for me.' Then he showed me how you would look. Now I see you are that person.'

"I was so taken by what he said, that I accepted his invitation. He gave me one room near that mosque, where I stayed for one year. I didn't go out except to pray and to sit in the majlis of two eminent scholars of Homs, who were teaching Recitation (tajwid), Exegesis (tafsir), Narration of Traditions ('ilm al-hadith) and Jurisprudence (fiqh). They were Shaykh Muhammad `Ali `Uyun as-Sud and Shaykh Abdul `Aziz `Uyun as-Sud, the Mufti of Homs. I also attended the spiritual teachings of two Naqshbandi Shaykhs, Shaykh `Abul Jalil Murad and Shaykh Sa'id as-Suba'i. My heart was yearning to go to Sham. Because the war was so intense, I decided to go to Tripoli in Lebanon, from there to Beirut and from Beirut to Sham by a safer way."

The invocation of visions claim proof to his sainthood. Tradition suggests that only the gifted and the purest of souls are able to experience direct communion with the Prophet, albeit through dreams. These mentions of
visions are often supplemented by testimonials among the living, concurring for the Sheikh’s exceptional ability. His murid relates;

“In 1971, Shaykh Nazim was in Cyprus for the three months of Rajab, Sha`ban, and Ramadan, as was his custom. One day, in Sha`ban, we received a call from the airport in Beirut and it was the Shaykh telling us to come and get him. We were surprised that he had come, as we were not expecting him, but we quickly went to pick him up. He told us, "I have been ordered by the Prophet to come to you today, because your father is going to die. I am to wash him, shroud him and bury him and then go back to Cyprus." We said, "O our Shaykh, our father is healthy, nothing is wrong with him." He said, "That is what I have been ordered." He was absolutely certain, and since we had been taught to accept what the Shaykh says, we submitted to him.

He told us to gather the family and to bring them to see my father one last time. We believed him and we called all the family to come. Everyone was surprised and some didn't believe when we called them; some came and some didn't come. My father knew nothing about that matter, but only saw the relatives coming to see him as something ordinary. It was a quarter to seven. The Shaykh said, "Now I have to go up to your father's apartment to recite on him the chapter of Qur'an Ya Sin ash-Sharif as he passes away." He went up to my father's flat from our flat below. He was greeted by my father at the door. My father said, "O Shaykh Nazim, it has been a long time since we heard you recite Qur'an, won't you read for us?" Then Shaykh Nazim began to recite the chapter of Quran Ya Sin ash-Sharif. Just as he was finishing the chapter, the clock struck seven. Just then my father cried out, "My heart, my heart!" We lay him down and my brother and sister, who are both doctors, came to check him. They found his heart racing out of control and within minutes he breathed his last.

Everyone looked at Shaykh Nazim with awe and astonishment. "How did he know?" we were wondering. "How did he come from Cyprus just for this? What kind of saint is he? How did he know that time so precisely? What kind of secret was he carrying in his heart? What kind of perfect saint is he who knows things that people cannot know?" 38

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As Weber suggests, pure charisma is the type that precludes all forms of an ordered economy. By virtue of its nature, it is not an institutional structure, “pure charisma does not know any ‘legitimacy’ other than that flowing from personal strength, that is, one which is constantly being proved” (Weber in Turner, 1998: 248). The genuinely charismatic ruler is responsible to those whom he rules. He is responsible for but one thing, that he personally and actually be the God-willed master. The legitimacy of charisma “rests wholly upon the faith invested in the leader, and faith cannot be coerced” (Parkin, 1992: 85). The miracles performed by Sheikh Nazim attest to his special prowess and elevates his status above and beyond the common man.

As these stories are rehashed time and time again, it ingrains the “mythic” quality of the accounts and envelops the Sheikh in a magical aura. This also implies that the position of the charismatic leader is at once both immaculate and precarious. This is so since the Sheikh is required to showcase his miracles time and time again. The breach of trust and faith in the Sheikh can be incurred if the Sheikh compromises himself in any way. At the start of the millennium, Sheikh Nazim predicted that the world would come to an end at a given date. Trusting followers adhered to his warnings and made suitable preparations. When the day came to pass and his predictions fell short, many left the tariqa after having felt disillusioned by his prophecy. This event caused the loss in credibility of the Sheikh and his tariqa. However, the tariqa countered critics by saying that due to
Sheikh Nazim’s prayers, God had showered his Grace upon mankind and spared them. Yet, this did not deter some of those who had left the tariqa.

### 5.2 Social function of charisma

The charisma of the Sheikh does not exist in a vacuum. To reach its potential, it has to be situated within a complementary social environment that is receptive to and is actively seeking it. Due to this, Friedland (1964) suggests that the “concept can be sociologically useful by focusing on the analysis of social situations within which charisma develops” (21). Towards such an end, it is useful that Weber’s concept of the charismatic authority be analysed along with his concept of the prophet. Weber conceptualizes a prophet “to mean a purely individual bearer of charisma, who by virtues of his mission proclaims a religious doctrine or divine commandment” (1922, 1963: 46). Accordingly, charisma resides within the individual with a corresponding mission directed towards a specific community. In his description of the prophet, Weber does not make any radical distinction between the “renewer of religion” – one who preaches an older revelation, actual or supposititious; and a “founder of religion” – one who claims to bring completely new deliverances, as both are functionally similar.

Weber notes that charismatic leaders have always featured in all societies through time;
“In any social order there would always be enough suffering or simmering rage or cosmic anxiety to ensure a following for the leader with a simple solution to it all” (ibid).

Shils (1965, 1968) suggests that “charisma is not only compatible with the modern world, but an essential feature of every form of society” (in Wallis, 1993: 168), as also Wilson (1975) who finds “significant signs of charisma in advanced industrial societies” (in Wallis, 1993: 168). After all, the charismatic figure is one who displays a “mastery of fate” and “world-ordering capacities” in times of disorder such as in social or cultural crises.

As far as the current religious climate is concerned, Weber’s observation is valid. The intensely bureaucratic nature of modern life has prompted a revival in charismatic leaders. The ability of the Sheikh to appeal to his constituents lies in the efficacy of framing. He must be able to couch the standing problems of the day, preoccupations, concerns and niggling insecurities of those to whom he wishes to appeal to.

In fact, an analysis of the Naqshbandi Haqqani literature reveals just as much. Sheikh Nazim is celebrated as a renewer of the times;

“Syakh Muhammad Nazim Adil al-Haqqani is the reviver, the renewer, and the caller to God in this age, the age of technology and material progress. Syakh Nazim has been blessed with the responsibility to reach all around the world on a mission of enlightenment. His goal is to restore the consciousness of God among all peoples and invite them to sincere belief and worship” (Kabbani, 2004, italics mine).
In this manner, Sheikh Nazim is a rightful prophet with a specific mission. Wilson (1975) views charisma as a response to social disruption, “the prophet embodies the wish for dramatic change in the face of present evil” (in Wallis, 1993: 170). The prophetic mission of Sheikh Nazim “in this age of technology and material progress” implicitly envelopes the modern era in a cloud of crisis, characterized by a general spiritual dearth. He is sent to correct this and to “restore the consciousness of God among all peoples”.

The concern with the ills of modernity is reflected through conversations with respondents. Many echo sentiments of danger, insecurity and loneliness attached to modern life. Among common themes are the “degeneration of values”, “waywardness of youths” and “rampant social problems”. One respondent (F12) mentioned that,

“The world as it is today is open to so many influences that we are open to many negative things. Just look at the influence of the Internet. Now we don’t talk about the negative influence on TV anymore, TV is a thing of the past, now everything is on the Internet. And the Internet is not on a bulky computer you can station at the living room where as a mom I can keep an eye on my kid. The Internet is on the handphone! Beat that! How do we keep an eye on kids nowadays? It’s not possible anymore”.

Another (M5) mentioned that,

“This time now more than during any time period, we need to have a righteous leader to guide us. We need a true leader to guide us onto the righteous path. It is becoming more difficult to be righteous nowadays”.

When asked how the problems of today are any different from before, respondents mentioned that the degeneration of family ties and rising
individualism, coupled with the increasingly globalized world has made bad influences more susceptible to the undiscerning, especially youths.

As respondents deliberate, it is with a keen sense of introspection as they weave their individual life narratives with the direct “risks” of modern living. The emphasis on self-identity in the globalized world coupled with the appeal to a return to tradition points to a keen situational anxiety expressed by respondents. This is best reflected by Giddens (1991) when he astutely suggested that,

“Modernity, it might be said, breaks down the protective framework of the small community and of tradition, replacing these with much larger, impersonal organizations. The individual feels bereft and alone in a world in which she or he lacks the psychological supports and the sense of security provided by more traditional settings.” (33)

In a society heightened by risks, religion is the panacea, or so it seems. Religious authority functions as both sources of and cures to problems brought upon by modern living. In a tautological struggle, the charismatic figure never fails its function, undergoing cycles of peaks and troughs through time.

5.3 Millennialism

Returning to Weber, the prophet is one who stabilizes the disruptive world. His “disposition to see the world and events in mythical terms … and to construe all present evils as susceptible to messianic
transformation…” (Wilson in Wallis, 1993: 170) ensures that he comes loaded with the promise of prophecy.

The theme of the end of the world, the *Mahdi* and the ‘Signs of the Hour’ is prominent of the *tariqa* and has been noted by a number of scholars (Damrel, 2006: 121). The concern for this theme can be observed especially among North American followers. However, it is not completely lost on Singaporean followers as respondents often make reference to the coming of the end of the days, the imminence of the *Mahdi* and Armageddon. A respondent (M6) said that

> “the end of days is coming very soon, look at the state of the world today, it is in such chaos, there is much unhappiness in the human soul because of it, God is trying to show us that the end is coming soon”.

The Haqqani Sheikhs admit to their understanding of the *Dajjal* and the *Mahdi*, claiming that both are alive now and that apocalyptic global conflict is imminent. One respondent was clearly absorbed in his conviction that the prophesied is about to play out within his lifetime, referring to the endless spate of “*wabak*” (calamities) witnessed today. These include man-engineered destructions such as the 9/11 attacks but mostly refer to natural disasters such as the tsunami, earthquakes and the catalogue of epidemics such as the mad cow disease, bird flu, swine flu and many others. Pointing to the exhaustive list of global pandemic, he claims

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39 *Masih al-Dajjal* is an evil figure in Islamic eschatology.
40 *Mahdi* is a redeemer figure in Islamic eschatology.
that this was God’s way of showcasing to Man a small sliver of what is to come on the Last Day. “The Signs are obvious and clear to all, there is no mistake that we are the final children of History”, he says.

A high-risk society entrenches one within a state of perpetual disorientation, which at the same time, albeit ironically, affirms one’s faith. Each calamity and every disaster only serves to confirm the prophecy and consolidate one’s belief. The general upset of unforeseen and uncontrollable global disasters has found recourse through a religious framework of fate, destiny and prophecy.

To a great extent, the Naqshbandi Haqqani has succeeded in leveraging upon the events of the day and the high levels of general discontent of a generation to propose a panacea in the form of the tariqa. It has successfully transformed the frame of a Sufi oriented pietistic group to one that ameliorates insecurities brought about by contemporary events and to present a solution for them. Yet, the nature of Sheikh Nazim’s mission imbued by a specific sense of a cultural life-world associated with “technology and material progress” begs the question if his mission is excluded from many who are not privy to such currency. In fact, it is reported that Sheikh Hisham’s mission in America has managed to bring over “20,000 educated, Caucasian Americans from the middle and upper classes” (in Barnel, 1999: 117, italics mine). It seems that the tariqa Naqshbandi Haqqani is able to capture a specific niche in religious
following, made up of individuals who are upwardly mobile, cosmopolitan and modern. The peculiar demography of his followers is a significant feature of the tariqa.
CHAPTER SIX

6.1 Language as currency

As the running account of this study suggests, the Naqshbandi Haqqani appears to be attractive to a peculiar demography; the middle class and the youths\textsuperscript{41}. The case is consistent for the zawiyah in Singapore. Certainly, their weekly meetings witness the representation of a wider variety of demographics including the elderly. Yet, the bulk of representation especially among committed members, are from the above-mentioned categories. This is a curious observation when contrasted against the context of pre-existing tariqas in the region, most of which are populated by the middle-aged and the elderly.

When this peculiarity is explored and respondents are asked to reflect on the main qualities that attracted them to the tariqa, an overwhelming majority revealed that it is due to the medium of instruction\textsuperscript{42}. The medium of instruction for the tariqa is the English language. This is a striking admission as it is the main factor that sets it apart from other tariqas in the region. In a critical analysis of the use of language, Bourdieu insists that “language is firmly situated within social relationships and interaction… linguistic relations are always relations of power…” (Jenkins, 2007: 154). Therefore, this exercise shall uncover the preference for the English language within the matrix of power and contestations. Language

\textsuperscript{41} These categories may not be mutually exclusive as they often straddle one another.

\textsuperscript{42} The primary reason was in fact the Sheikh whose appeal has been discussed.
is conceptualized as a form of capital whose gain increases ones’ social standing. This can only be understood in the context of religious language use in Singapore.

6.1.1 History of religious language use in Singapore

Traditionally the vernacular of Islamic religious teachings in the region is the Malay language. This is so, since Islam is mostly confined to and practiced by the culturally Malay. The ethnic bind of religion is reflected even up till today where most mosques across Singapore operate in the Malay language, while a few operate in Tamil. Although it is not an official position, mosques are ethnically affiliated and the majority of them service the Malay community. Aside mosques, private companies offering religious education such as Andalus and other Muslim organizations such as PERGAS operate in the Malay language. One exception is Darul Arqam, where the operational language is English, since it caters to converts to Islam.

To understand the state of affairs today one is required to examine the history of religious language use in the region. The history of religious

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43 This is with the significant exception of the Indian Muslim community whose religious classes are conducted in Tamil.
44 It is no wonder that the situation is such, considering the double bind of ethnic and religious identity of the Malay/Muslim even to the ends of dedicated Malay/Muslim organizations (MMO). This is perpetuated in other communities in Singapore due to the Singapore’s communitarian policy. However, due to several factors, the case is more so for the Malay/Muslim community.
language use cannot be divorced from the history of Islamization in the region, which stretches far back into the 7th century. Islam was firmly established in the region with Aceh followed by Melaka being the centre of Islamic learning and civilization prior to the region’s encounter with colonial powers. A strong marker of language influence and use in the region can be found through analyzing the use of script which evolved over time from the Pallava and Kavi script to Jawi in the 14th century. In the 19th century during colonial rule, the demise of Jawi set in opting for the Latinized script – Rumi. In addition, the colonial period saw the systematization of a racial policy, which saw the segregation of the populace according to racial boundaries. This systematic enclavement was part of British’s divide-and-rule strategy. Furthermore, domestic politics ensured that the protection of Malay religion and customs maintained the functionality of the Malay language.

Following Independence, the People’s Action Party (PAP) justified its policies through the principle of ‘multiracialism’. The origins of multiracialism in Singapore is found in the political philosophy of the English-educated middle-class intellectuals who dominated local politics. Benjamin (1967) describes ‘multiracialism’ as one of the “founding myths” of the Republic. The significance of this is that the PAP government regards the relationship between society, culture, race, ethnicity, and the individual as unequivocally interchangeable (Benjamin, 1976 in Lian & Hill, 1995: 94). The trouble with racial pigeon-holing is especially obvious in
the state’s management of Islam. This is particularly apparent of the Malay community who has remained religiously homogenous with 99.6% consistently practicing Islam. On the other hand, the Muslim community itself is relatively more varied with over 12.2% Indian adherents. However, this marginal group is relegated to the minority as public discourse generally refer to the ethnically Malay when addressing the Muslim community.

One of the consequences of multiracialism is the language policy. The language policy of Singapore can best be described as ‘multi-lingualism’ or ‘linguistic pluralism’, which prescribes that all four official languages should be treated as equal in principle (Chee, 1990: 1069). This policy is most clearly and significantly manifested in the Republic’s educational system and mass communication structure (ibid). While English remains as the official operational language, Malay language is relegated to the status of national language reserved for ceremonial purposes. Malay, along with other ethnic languages, is taught in national schools as 2nd language. As such, students are systematically separated for 2nd language classes based on their ascribed ethnic identifier or their ‘mother tongue’. Ethnic languages are promoted so as to maintain and preserve the cultures of the ethnic groups. As such, while English is promoted as the language of progress and development, ethnic languages are relegated to the cultural domain. Consequently, through the course of development and progress
of a nation, not all languages are regarded as equal contrary to the principle of ‘multi-lingualism’.

6.1.2 Development and valuation of language

To place Singapore’s language policy within the context of nation-building, it is clear that English is promoted as the language of technology and economic development and as a means to “achieve politico-operational integration and to develop instrumental attachments to the supra-ethnic national system among the ethnically homogenous” (Chee, 1069). When these processes come together, Hornberger observes “local languages are abandoned or subordinated to ‘world languages’ in diglossic relations” (2000: 177). Diglossia is in the coexistence within a given society of a “high” and a “low” variety of the language. In the case of English vis-à-vis Malay languages, the former is promoted at the expense of the latter.

Since language acquisition is determined by distinct socialization processes that varies across individuals, this has translated language ability into social markers. As Bourdieu points out, “linguistic differences are the ‘retranslation’ of social differences: linguistic markets are, therefore, heavily implicated in specific fields … dominant legitimate language is a distinct capital which, in discourse, produces, as its profit, a sense of the speaker’s distinction” (in Jenkins, 2007: 154).
In the last few years, mosques have expanded their outreach through the use of the English language. The weekly Friday sermons (*khutbah jumaat*) are conducted in English on selected weeks and in selected mosques. Mosques that cater to the English language are determined by zoning. As such the Al-Falah mosque, located in the heart of Orchard Road, offers more classes and sermons in the English language. While there is progressive expansion in outreach, it remains as a modest endeavour. As it is, the matter is of utmost delicate deliberation with contending parties branding such efforts as “anglicizing the mosque”. Instead, they remain adamant in preserving mosques as exclusive cultural bastions of the Malay community. Many also contend that the move to “anglicize the mosque” is a middle class enterprise, catered to the English educated and at the same time sidelining many who are comfortable in the Malay language.

Nonetheless, the recognition of language preference as a generational issue, has seen MUIS developing its religious classes – the aLIVE programme - dedicated to kids, tweens, teens and youths, in the English language. They do so in recognition that the younger generation has grown more comfortable with English as their first language and in order to maximize their outreach to youths, they have to follow suit. As at time of research, it is suggested that there are operational lapses since the English language is a barrier for *asatizahs* who conduct these classes, most of whom are educated in the Arabic and Malay vernacular. This trend signals the changing
dynamics of religious membership within the Malay community and deserves an in-depth study on it.

Where the Naqshbandi Haqqani is concerned, its use of the English language has attracted many followers. This coincides with its expanding member demography of youths and professionals. My youth respondents claim that they are more comfortable in the English language and lament the use of Malay in most religious classes provided in mosques. Even among tariqas, most are still conducted in Malay and consequently dominated by the older generation. As such, they feel alienated from the religious community around them. My respondent remarked,

“My parents keep asking me to go to masjid with them to listen to ceramah (sermon) and I refuse. I feel bad for refusing but I explain it to them that I don’t want to listen to ceramah because they are in Malay. I am not saying that Malay is low class or what. Come on, we are all from national schools right, we speak English most of the time. My mind functions in English and when they speak in Malay, my brain automatically switches off.”

In contrast, my respondents claim that the Naqshbandi Haqqani has successfully adapted to current times and to the needs of the younger population. However, my primary respondent (M1) mentioned that not all are attracted to the use of English since there are those who left the group because of it. Those who left are mostly those who are older suggesting language as a barrier for them. The generational issue with regards to language is obvious as it acts as either an incentive or a deterrent when it comes to membership.
Aside the generational issue, my respondents added that the use of the English language has seen the *tariqa* attracting followers across ethnic boundaries. They lament that Islam in Singapore is aligned to ethnic ascription, there are “Malay mosques” and there are “Indian Muslim mosques”. To belong to either, one is required to possess the cultural affiliations associated with each community. My respondent mentioned that even among local *tariqas*, the Chistiyya is branded as the Indian Muslim *tariqa* while the Naqshbandi as the Malay *tariqa* and so on. Certainly these ethnic associations are not prescribed as formal rules of belonging yet they strongly influence an individual’s choice of membership. On the other hand, the Naqshbandi Haqqani operates in English and so allows followers to transcend ethnic boundaries, which has thus far coddled the experience of Islam in Singapore. This is reflected in the membership of the local *zawiya*. Followers include the ethnically Malay, Indian, Turkish, Arab and even Chinese. On a typical weekly association session, these varieties can be seen but they are best represented during the bigger sessions when either Sheikh Nazim or Sheikh Hisham visits.

6.1.3 Strategies of action

Among others, in accounting for the preference for English language, language is to be conceptualized not merely as a tool of communication but as currency. Here, Bourdieu’s concept of the “cultural capital” is useful. Bourdieu explains that society is a social field with a structured
system of positions. These positions and the relationships between them, are determined by the distribution of various resources, or forms of capital. Bourdieu distinguished between economic capital (material resources and wealth), social capital (significant relationships between individuals), symbolic capital (accumulated prestige or honour), and cultural capital, which refers to “skills and knowledge, acquired through education, which can be used to acquire jobs, money and status” (in Guest, 2001: 185). Forms of cultural capital may include language, etiquette and others.

Bourdieu stresses that these different types of capital may be converted into one another e.g. education (cultural capital) to employment (economic capital), association with other elites (social capital) into prestige and status (symbolic capital). The transferability of different forms of capital embellishes the role and encourages the acquisition of seemingly benign forms of communication.

In this case, the use of the English language as cultural capital “enhances the individual’s acquisition of resources in a competitive social field where individuals and groups compete for power and legitimation” (Guest, 2007: 186). In a multi-lingual society where a hierarchy of language is present and English more than the ethnic vernacular is vehicle to and prided as the language of development and progress, it is no wonder that a religious group’s association to the English language attracts those privy to such
capital. Consequently, it inducts the otherwise local, insular community of piety into a global network of followers who shares the same lingua franca.

Bourdieu suggests that the strategies of action displayed in the choice of tariqa membership reveals that “actors engage in considerable practical strategizing in their everyday interactions that stem more from the dispositions of habitus” (Swartz, 1997: 114). Habitus is conceptualized to mean

“a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them”.

In other words, habitus is conceptualized as “habit-forming force” or the “cultural unconscious” that derives from the class-specific experiences of socialization in family and peer groups. In an effort to reconcile between forces of structure and individual choices, Bourdieu’s concept of the habitus offers a refreshing understanding through the concept of the “embodied structure” of the individual as he negotiates his actions through certain predispositions accrued through his socialization processes.

This applies well to the case of the Naqshbandi Haqqani as it witnessed attrition among potential members who were not comfortable with the use of the English language, its activity on the Internet or its westward outlook. Most of those who left the tariqa cited reasons above and they are
those who are older in age and who are more comfortable in their ethnic
vernacular. Their brief experience with the Naqshbandi Haqqani found
them returning to tariqa groups that have existed since the early years,
comfortable with the age-old traditional experience of tariqas. One
respondent mentioned that tariqa membership is like “a matchmake of
souls” and that “some people are attracted to one and not to another”. As
elusive as it is thought to be, membership to tariqa is neither a case of fate
nor destiny. Instead it relies very much on the structured dispositions
common to a group of individuals, derived from and in sustenance of an
exclusive habitus.

6.2 Intellectualization of religion

In response to the changing nature of tariqa membership, one respondent
(M3) mentioned that in the past, tariqa had “followers of habit”. Today
followers demand much more, they demand explanation and deep study of
the basis of the tariqa. The same respondent described the multi layers of
tassawuf – tariqat, ma’rifat, haqiqat; and through this analogy explained the
incremental stages of learning through time. The yearning for higher levels
of gnosis requires earnest trust in one’s teacher and greater commitment as
a student. Today the tariqa has more “followers of knowledge” than
“followers of habit” (it is not uncommon for tariqas of the past to be
associated with rituals) resulting in tighter membership of tariqas today with
a greater semblance of community than before.
The same respondent suggested that his interest in the *tariqa* was fueled by the wide availability of books on the topic. Akin to Roof’s (1999) “seekers”, my respondent emphasized that youths today are on a “discovery trail, searching and choosing for themselves a path to follow” and that the availability of publications for the lay men significantly aids the process. He also adds that the pedagogical style of *tariqas* today is different from in the past where learning was mostly through the oral tradition. He observes that the rampant availability of books enables the individual to peruse them and to attain a deeper level of understanding at his own time. According to him,

“People may disagree with me but let’s just compare our time with our parents’ time. Ok, first of all, our parents rarely went to religious classes, at the very least they *belajar mengaji* (learnt to recite the Qur’an). And even if they did go for religious classes, they just took in what was taught and hardly practiced it. Today, more youths are interested in religion. They are self-motivated. So you find more youths going to PERGAS classes, Andalus and what have you. And that is not enough, they want to find out more. Today, information about other religious practices can also be easily found. They compare, they ask questions, they are fueled to learn.”

Tong (2007) observes that in an effort to attract more youths to the faith, Chinese religions\(^{45}\) have taken it upon themselves to conduct Sunday classes, organize “faith camps” and even publish books detailing the faith in English. What Tong describes as a novelty to popular Chinese religions, paralleling it to Christians who have been operating in such fashion

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\(^{45}\) Chinese religions refer to Buddhism, Taoism and ancestor worship or a conglomerate of all.
compels him to describe the phenomenon as the “intellectualization of the religion”. The intellectualization of religion is the process of greater systematization of the doctrines of religion towards the ends of rationalizing the beliefs and rituals of the religion. In the past, popular Chinese religions have focused on practice. They are also strongly tied to the kin and the family and involved less theological discourse. Today, an increasing number of youths are no longer interested in blindly following the tradition of the family and instead demand answers to their questions. Coupled by the intense competition of Christianity, Chinese religions are witnessing a steady decline in membership to the faith. As a result, they have resorted to repackaging the faith in a manner more palatable to inquisitive youths who are restless to practice and rituals and instead demand reason to faith.

In a similar fashion, the *tariqa* has gone down the same route. One of my respondents (F5) mentioned that there is a stark difference between the *tariqa* of the past and that of today. She claims that in the past, people were just following rituals, reciting *dzikr* as told and going through the practical motions associated with membership to *tariqa*. Today, more are unwilling to settle with that, “people seek answers within themselves and from others”. They long to be fed with answers to their questions. As a result, today’s *tariqa* is first about understanding and only then followed by practice, “one understands with the mind and then with the heart and then one has faith”. The first level of understanding is associated with the
cognitive and the intellect. In this manner, Tong’s “intellectualization of religion” applies well to the phenomenon of *tariqa* today, whose bevy of publications showcase a discussion of its theology and practice.

The Naqshbandi Haqqani is active in publications and have up to date published over 30 books including an encyclopedia set of 7 volumes\(^46\). The difference between the publications of the past and today is that in the past they would be in Arabic language and as such are closed off to most who are not privy to the language. The contents of the books focus on the history of the *tariqa*, its practices, its belief in the coming of the *Mahdi* and other topics on angels, light, meditation, divine energy and others. These books are published in the United States in the English language and are easily available in associated bookstores. In Singapore, the facilitation of access to these books is provided by Islamic bookstores here. A significant addition to the Islamic bookstore repertoire here is ‘Wardah Books’ located in the heart of Bussorah Street. This bookstore exclusively panders to the English-educated clientele who wishes to learn about the religion in the English language. Branding itself as a “traditional bookstore” it serves as a niche for topics on Sufism, spirituality and mysticism. The bookstore carries many of Naqshbandi Haqqani’s publications and is a supporter of the *tariqa*. During Sheikh Hisham’s latest visit, they aided in the selling of tickets for the event. It comes to no surprise that the bookstore attracts

many youths and professionals across ethnic boundaries. They also attract non-Muslims who are interested to learn more about the religion.

The Naqshbandi Haqqani, as it appeals to the middle and upper classes among the faithful, is set to retain a particular homology of followers. Distinctively marked by the upwardly mobile lifestyles among the sophisticatedly literate whose expansive social networks above and beyond local confines of community and tradition ensures global membership to an exclusive fraternity, with the promise of a modern prophecy.
CHAPTER SEVEN

7.1 Surviving the modern age

True to its mission as “the renewer, the reviver and the caller to God in this age of technology and material progress”, the Naqshbandi Haqqani is no stranger to the World Wide Web, spreading its network across the digital frontier. Its application of new media technologies has increased its popularity among youths and the technologically savvy. It has revolutionized the experience of the tariqa as materials are made widely available at the click of a button. Yet, in an added dimension to the analysis, the application of new media technology is not as innocent as it was perceived to be. While technology has effected a change in form; the content and substance also undergo significant adjustments to them.

7.2 New media

New media encompass both new forms of digital media and also the remaking of more traditional forms of media for example the television, radio, print etc. While new media may suggest the proliferation of greater mediums of disseminating information, the content in itself is often “recombinant” which suggests that they are derived from already existing media content developed in other formats (Flew, 2002). A case in point is YouTube, which hosts many forms of recombinant media. Aside from such cases, there is a proliferation of amateur videos done up by simple technological mediums. Where the tariqa is concerned, many of the
videos are of these types. For example, an amateur videographer records a dzikr or a sermon session and uploads them under his online ID.

A simple Internet search on tariqa garners a long and expanding list of self-hosted tariqa sites. These sites expand every day and register hundreds of hits daily. One of such sites is that hosting the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Sufi Order of America. It is the primary site from which all other Naqshbandi-Haqqani zawiyahs around the world refer to, including the NHS. The site features information on the tariqa, the list of their events and activities and a multimedia resource centre which is hyperlinked to the main site. The multimedia resource site features the visual or/and audio-recorded sermons of both Sheikh Nazim and Sheikh Hisham. It also features a live radio network and links to an online store that sells Islamic paraphernalia. Other than these dedicated sites, detailed information on tariqa is found as hyperlinks in many other Islamic websites. Tariqa is also on the YouTube, a video-sharing website which has shown incremental popularity of usage since its birth three years ago. A keyword search of ‘tariqa/tarikat/tarekat’ on YouTube churns out over a thousand videos and they increase steadily by the day. Tariqa groups have also made use of social-networking websites such as Facebook, MySpace and Yahoo! Groups etc.

47 http://www.naqshbandi.org/
48 In addition, each zawiyah could host their own website, for example Naqshbandi Haqqani Singapore is at http://naqshbandi-singapore.org/main/, while Naqshbandi Haqqani New York/New Jersey is at http://www.sufinyc.com/.
49 http://www.sufilive.com/
50 http://www.isn1.net/
51 http://www.mereislam.info/, http://www.simplyislam.com/, etc.
The adoption of new media by *tariqas* is not a relationship on a one-way street. As *tariqas* seek to define their existence online, they adapt to new parameters. As such, one can observe a change in core structures and functions to *tariqa*. Today, the NH *tariqa* provide *bay’ah* that can be done online. This seemingly benign adaptation has resulted in a change in the meaning and significance of the ritual and has implications to the structure of traditional Sufi pedagogy.

7.2.1 *Bay’ah* Online

*Bay’ah* simply defined is an oath. It is an oath of allegiance between the teacher and the student that the former will be the main guide in the latter’s life, mainly that which concerns his spiritual development although in many cases this is not its only purview. The *bay’ah* is legally non-binding in the worldly sense. However, it carries with it enormous gravity in the spiritual realm. By having taken the *bay’ah* the student is initiated into the chain of authority, which connects him to the Prophet (pbuh). The intense reverence that a student has for his teacher is not mere obligation, but a duty. With this *bay’ah* comes unquestioning authority for as long as it does not go against the dictates of *shari’a* and for as long as the teacher does not deviate from the True cause.

The *tariqa* Naqshbandi-Haqqani stresses the *bay’ah* between the *sheikh* and the student,

“the student product of a particular *syakb* will bear the stamp of that *syakb’s* teaching and character...In the Naqshbandi Order, the living presence of a connected *syakb* is essential. Through his physical and
spiritual linkage to the Prophet(s) he establishes the student’s connection.
The student’s obligation is to maintain his connection to his syakh, to hold
tightly to the hand of the one within his reach”  

The Naqshbandi-Haqqani tariqa is structurally formal and provides prescriptions
and proscriptions detailing its path. In the case of the Naqshbandi Haqqani the
primary requirement of membership is the bay’ah i.e. initiation to Sheikh Nazim
and his appointees. The bay’ah spiritually binds the student to Sheikh Nazim
through the line of genealogy (silsilah) back to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh),

“The seeker must follow a perfect Master able to guide him to the
way of Allah, Almighty and Exalted, and to illuminate for him that way
until he reaches the State of Annihilation. The seeker must give his oath
and his promise to his guide, to learn from him how to leave his bad
manners and to lift himself to better conduct in order to reach the Perfect
Knowledge of Spirituality.”  

The act of bay’ah is a fundamental principle in the tariqa. It reinforces allegiance
between the student and his master and establishes a relation of accountability
between them;

“Thus we see that it is an important factor in every Sufi Order for
one to take bay’ah with the shaikh, in order to sanctify oneself and to be
lifted up to the Divine Presence. These guides are the revivers in every
century, to connect our hearts with the heart of the Prophet (s), who in his
turn connects our heart to the Divine Presence. These guides are the
beacon of the light of the Prophet (s) and the light of the Divine Presence
and they are the true examples for all nations to follow.”

54 The bay’ah has been argued to be a traditional practice dating to the time of the Prophet. Scholars recall the Hadith, which mentions specific periods of time (usually in times of war) when the Prophet will ask for the bay’ah of his followers. Although the context may have changed, the concept persists.
Therefore the bay’ab between a student and his teacher is a traditional exercise of great importance performed in utmost respect. It warrants the status of a rite of passage crucial to an individual’s spiritual development. This greatly personal act is physically conducted where the student will seek out his sheikh usually at an important or special occasion. Hands will be clasped in a symbolic gesture of agreement over the recitation of surahs from the Qur’an. Traditionally, bay’abs held the esteem of a sacred gift such that it was not asked for but conferred upon. If and when, the sheikh perceives his student to have reached the stage of learning where he is ready to receive bay’ab, will the bay’ab be offered to him.

Today, the NH tariqa includes the provision for bay’ab to be conducted online. This innovation was introduced as the tariqa seeks to adapt to its increasingly online transnational community. Since its introduction in the year 2006, the number of people who have taken their bay’ab online has risen incrementally. Followers of the NH tariqa are led to trawl through the NH America website and click on a hyperlink which will lead them to the bay’ab page. A disclaimer advises those who have direct contact with a representative (khalifah) in the area to conduct it in person. A bay’ab text is provided where the individual has to recite along with a recorded audio file. One is then required to click on the hands which links to Sheikh Nazim and officiates his bay’ab. One is also reminded to email his particulars to the organization to inform that he has done his bay’ab.

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56 As at time of research, this was not available.
online. One is also reminded to “renew” his bay'ah if he should meet with Sheikh Nazim or Sheikh Hisham personally\(^{57}\).

7.2.2. Impact of New Media

The inception of new media has revolutionized the ways in which traditional religion is understood and practiced. Studies have traced how religious rituals as phenomenological entities are affected through the modes in which they are conceived (see Leary, Ong etc.). In a classic study by Ong (in O’Leary, 1996), traced how the shift to a textually referent understanding of Protestant Christianity as opposed to an experiential one characteristic of the Catholic church was heralded by the Industrial Revolution through the increase in the availability of print Bible. This move has led to a departure from word as “performative” to word as “analogy” which has increased the distance between the signifier and the signified. In the same vein, analyses of virtual rituals (bay'ah online included) will stand to benefit from a symbolic interactionist perspective, especially that in the study of semiotics, the role and components of signs and symbols.

Ong (2002) in his work “Orality and Literacy” traced the cultural evolution of the Christian church vis-à-vis developments in the mediation of knowledge. Ong argued that a basic difference which underlies the Catholic and the Protestant churches is revealed very starkly in their understanding of the symbolic function of language. The communion ceremony is an excellent example. In the Catholic

\(^{57}\) See Appendix Six for screenshot of online bay'ah.
Church, the communion climaxes in the “words of institution” as bread and wine is effected through transubstantiation which then transforms them to the Real Presence of God. This is what J L Austin describes as “performative utterance”, a speech act that basically effects what it describes. In this case, the sacramental theory of language affirms the essential unity of signifier and signified. When Luther and the printing press broke this monopoly by publishing the first German bible, interpretation became the prerogative of every believer. In the communion liturgy of the Lutheran church for example, the minister directs the congregation on how to interpret the sacrament. The words of the minister were no longer performative utterances but rather mere reminder or analogy. In his system of words, the relationship between the sign and the thing signified is one that is analogical, no longer essential.58

Bay’ab as it is practiced as an important institution of tariqa groups have for hundreds of years stressed the primacy of face-to-face interaction. The sacred endowment of bay’ab, which initiates the individual into the chain of relation that ties him all the way to the Prophet (pbuh), is traditionally conducted in the physical presence of the teacher and his student. As such the meaning of bay’ab as both signifier and signified is locked in an interpretive bind to which the authority holds monopoly to. In this performative act, words are performative utterances that basically effects what it describes – an initiation, a loaded one at that.

58 An important thing to note is that in this case, the essential categories of analyses lie in the revolution of technology as it impacts upon culture a case in point being the Christian world. It is not my intention to propose any developmental similarities between the world of the Sufi and the Christian world.
Digitizing bay’ab has resulted in a change in the meaning and significance of bay’ab. As individuals far and wide now can get online and self-initiate himself into the tariqa, the signifier bay’ab opens up for itself the expansive interpretive possibilities for each individual. An example follows, in my conversations with the NHS members who are encouraging their members and those interested to go online to practice rituals, listen to advise and to perform bay’ab online, according to him, the meaning of bay’ab has changed. It is no longer perceived to be a sacred covenant much less an oath of allegiance. Rather my respondent (M6) understands is to mean the conferment of blessings (ambik berkat). To another (F10), the bay’ab online exercise is something rote which she may or may not do and even when she has, it does not bind her into following specific rituals required by the tariqa and is not detrimental to her spiritual well-being. The theosophy that follows from the evolution of ritual language, gesture, and performance has changed this rite of passage ceremony from its former status as an actual vehicle of saintly and even the Prophet’s presence to a mere analogy.

7.1.3 Network Sheikhs

As the nature of bay’ab changes, so does the role of the sheikh. The bay’ab is both a symbol and a form of pedagogical learning that characterizes Sufi circles. As mentioned by Buehler, “pedagogical development occurring in the Sufi environment were part of larger and widespread transformations in Islamic culture” (1998: 35). Today, we see Islamic pedagogy adapting to the developments of information technology and the rapid change in new forms of
The intimate role the Sufi *sheikh* plays in the lives of his students is not to be taken for granted. In fact, it reflects historical development within the Sufi community and the Muslim community at large. Sufi practices only became institutionalized in the 9th century when a much more structured authoritarian master-disciple relationship is introduced. Ibn Abbas ar Rundi (790/1388) a Morrocan Sufi, explained that there were two kinds of *sheikhs* defined by their scope of authority. One was the teaching-*sheikh* (*sheikh at-ta'alim*) and another was the directing-*sheikh* (*sheikh at-tarbiyya*). At the 9th century, *sheikhs* no longer adopted the informal role they once had. Both the scope and degree of Sufi authority became enlarged which resulted in a movement from the role of the teaching-*sheikh* to that of the directing-*sheikh*. This model of change began in Nishapur during the last quarter of the 9th century and spread unabated in the course of the 11th century until it became the norm in Sufism.

The typological differences between the teaching-*sheikh* and the directing-*sheikh* are as follows. The teaching *sheikh* provided instructions in religious duties, morals and theoretical Sufism. The relationship between students and *sheikhs* was one that was loose and fluid. Students traveled freely among Sufi teaching-*sheikhs*, sharing each other’s company. Allegiance is not a factor in their relationship as
students had many teaching-sheikhs and no particular allegiance to any of them. Such Sufis who followed this pedagogical style was Harith al-Mubashar and Muhammad Abu Talib al Malikki who taught themselves independently consulting the teacher to refine and guide their learning (ibid). By contrast, the directing-sheikh has moral control over his students. By the 11th century, disciples conceived of themselves as willing slaves. The disciple also practiced unquestioning obedience to the syakh. The questioning of “why” would be detrimental to the spiritual development of the disciple. Furthermore, it constitutes an exclusive relationship between the disciple and his sheikh in which he is only allowed to be under the supervision of one sheikh. The relationship is no longer loose and fluid but rigid and characterized by rigorous discipline. Carefree wandering was prohibited as the disciple had to ask his sheikh for permission to travel. Adab and akhlak became matters of utmost importance and was emphasized during the era of the directing-sheikh.

It seems that up to this date, the model of the directing-sheikh has persisted in most Sufi circles, although there exists some exceptions to the rule. Gilsenan (1973) in his study of the Sufi orders in Egypt typologically delineated the difference between an order and an association, the latter consisting of more lax rules and is closer to the model of the teaching-sheikh. While such exceptions persist, many Sufi orders today insists on bay‘ah, emphasizing exclusive loyalty to one sheikh and stressed levels or maqamat of revealed knowledge which is within the purview of the sheikh.
The Naqshbandi tariqa is one such tariqa, which emulates the directing-sheikh model and it has persisted over time and geographical diaspora. For such a model to persist through time, structural requirements are necessary and among which is the physical distance between the sheikh and his student. Therefore, the NHS example is a jarring exception to the rule. The physical meeting of Sheikh Nazim or Sheikh Hisham with his followers is few and far between. The lack of physical contact is made up for through the establishment of online networks. Therefore, it may be the case that the NHS tariqa is moving away from the model of the directing-sheikh.

I would like to venture that the NHS adopts a model of a “network-sheikh”. A network-sheikh is one characterized by the sheikh’s and his students’ pervasive use of the Internet as a mode of disseminating and acquiring knowledge respectively. More significantly, it is characterized by the distance between the sheikh and his students, which is mediated by gatekeepers, servers, webmasters etc. The ever-expanding chain of mediators between the sheikh and his students depersonalizes the close traditional relationship. Such an innovation in pedagogy downplays the importance of stages (maqamat) of knowledge. Traditionally, each student’s learning is a personal and private affair at the hands and the recommendation of the sheikh. This is not the case today as subbas, rituals and bay’abs are conducted online. What this means is that all students are privy to equal and identical education from the sheikh. The vertical model of education representing the hierarchical stages (maqamat) of learning is replaced by a horizontal model as the
net is cast far and wide. Also, the relationship between the *sheikh* and his students is one that is loose and fluid as the nature of *bay’ah* undergoes reconfiguration.

The phenomena of ‘*bay’ah online’ and ‘network-*sheikhs*’ are but a preliminary venture to the myriad of innovations that has characterized *tariqa* today as it adopts and (more significantly) adapts to new media and other forms of technology. Most significantly, it seeks to provide and explanatory paradigm to the incremental rise in *tariqa* membership through time. Gilsenan (1973) suggests that the *tariqa* may be thought of as existing in a continuous cyclical time where the future is in one sense but a constant reliving of and returning to the past. This view, which is essentially non-progressive and non-linear, sees History as an excrescence, and looks to a permanent, static, transcendent condition outside it. This paradox of transcendence and adaptation, presents us with an enigmatic puzzle that is characteristic of *tariqa* in the modern world.

What is often perceived as the bastion of the traditional and unchanging has been observed as far from such. In fact, the rise of membership and visibility of *tariqa* groups in the region could very well be acknowledged by the advancements in technology. Alas, this study indicated that innovation to form has led to a critical reconfiguration of content, as the unabated technology delivers its message.
CHAPTER EIGHT

8.1 Conclusion

Through time, the *tariqa* has weathered its ups and downs. Until fairly recently, it was experiencing a decline as witnessed by systematic objections both by purist and modernist reformers of Islam. Deemed as the bastion of the mystical, *tariqa’s* controversial association with Immanence has seen it suffer curious and disapproving remarks by many. Claimed as the abode of the traditional, the *tariqa* has been accused of stunting the culture of progress and growth of Islam and Muslims. In addition, the general pessimism of social observers towards the future of religion has further dampened the likelihood of *tariqa’s* survival. Yet, its rising visibility marked particularly by its successful and expanding membership among youths, attests to *tariqa’s* enduring character.

This thesis has sought for explanatory paradigms that may account for the revival of *tariqa* today. In doing so, it has uncovered both local and global factors that have come into play. It has discovered that global experiences of religion especially that of the United States bears a significant impact on the canvas of religiosity here in Singapore. The newborn zeal in spirituality in the United States has placed Sufism among the repertoire of revived spiritual movements. The timely entry of the Naqshbandi Haqqani has benefited from the critical mass of spiritual seekers of religion, ensuring its firm foothold in North America and subsequently spreading to other parts of the world.
8.1.1 Transnational religious movements

Admittedly, religion has historically crossed borders of empire, state and nation. However, ‘transnational’ in this exercise does not refer to traditional migratory patterns of religion that spanned across extended space and time. Rather, it refers to novel ways of experiencing religion, where distance is minimized through innovations in technology, be it through the affordability of travel or novel mediums of communication. This refers to radical ways in which religious experiences have crossed definite boundaries of nation states and cultural specificities of local communities. Beyer in Haynes (2001: 143) suggests that we live in “a globalizing social reality one in which previously effective barriers to communication no longer exist”. The development of transnational religious communities is greatly enhanced by ease of interpersonal and inter-group communications, helping to spread their message and to link up with like-minded groups across state boundaries.

This thesis has shown how cultural experiences in the United States have had a direct and more importantly, almost immediate, impact on the religious experience here in Singapore. The rise in spiritual movements across the United States had a favourable and sustaining effect on the rise of Sufism and its spillover to the region. The centrifugal radiation of influence for Islamic development found for itself a highly unlikely source – the United States. If historically, the nodes of Islamic development in Singapore pointed exclusively to the Middle East, India, Indonesia or Malaysia, this is no longer the case. The United States, rife with its
religious preoccupations, has now served as a feeder for contemporary religious resurgence. The Naqshbandi Haqqani is one example of many. This is one of the reasons why the study of contemporary religious activities must not fall short of taking into account factors that exist outside of its local context.

8.1.2 Emerging religious markets

Singapore is not home to a religious marketplace. While Singapore rightly boasts of a complex ethnic and religious composition all sharing the same social space; it is a stretch to assume that this “space” and the religions’ proximity to one another, is anything but physical. The Singapore religious landscape is littered with churches, mosques and temples in close proximity to one another – but that is the extent to which the congeniality ends. Religion in Singapore is highly regulated by the state whose pragmatic and realist stance towards social cohesion, continually asserts that the current religious harmony that Singapore experience should never be taken for granted,

“We have enjoyed racial and religious harmony since Independence. This does not prove that our social fabric is inherently stronger than other multi-racial societies, or that we are immune to the serious problems which have affected so many of them. It only shows the amount of care which has gone into tending it and strengthening it.” (Shared Values White Paper 1991: 4)

Singapore recognizes that religion serves as important cultural ballast. This can be seen through its introduction, albeit short-lived, of the Religious Knowledge programme in the school curriculum. On the other hand, it is also wary of the potency of religion as a rallying force for faith groups towards detrimental ends.
Weighing both ends of the scale, a great number of measures have been put in place to ensure constant and active surveillance on religious bodies and organizations. Legislative frameworks such as the Societies Act, the Penal Code and Sedition Act, the Internal Security Act and the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act, have been administered to guard religion against itself. The state also asserts symbolic and putative influence on the administration of faiths subscribed by religious minorities such as Islam through the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS), Sikhism through the Central Sikh Gurdwara Board Act (Cap. 357) and Hinduism through the Hindu Endowments Boards (Cap. 364) (Tan, 2008).

Regardless of conscientious top-down efforts in policing religion, this study has surfaced that such efforts do not prevent seekers of religion from exercising their agency in religious preference. Taking the example of Islam, while the mandate of MUIS gives it the authority over physical institutions belonging to Muslims such as the mosques, madrasahs, wakaf property etc., it does not have the mandate of authority over religious discourses. In today’s day and age, where the physical bounds of religiosity is diminishing and taken over by virtual networks that span time and space, such as the “network sheikhs”, policing physical bounds does not

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59 MUIS has the ability to issue a fatwa (religious ruling) over what they deem to be deviationary practices (ajaran sesat) and enjoin the Muslim public not to follow the teachings. Under the Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA) (Chap3, 139, 1), “Whoever shall teach or publicly expound any doctrine or perform any ceremony or act relating to the Muslim religion in any manner contrary to the Muslim law shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding $2,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or to both.” Notwithstanding the burden of proof to show that the teaching contravenes Muslim law; such cases will be referred to the Police who will assess the matter as a security issue. If no obvious threat is found, the police will deem it as an “intra-faith” issue and is beyond their purview.
deter the proliferation of religious discourses. Where discourses are concerned, one can speak of a market of religious discourses, one that is undeniably emerging.

8.1.3 Charismatic authority

This thesis goes on to show how the figure of the charismatic leader has made its opportune comeback. As it applies to the tariqa, the Sheikh is the fount of Truth and the vessel of authority. He needs no other validation other than the miraculous feats that he displays for himself. Yet, no charismatic leader is one, unless he is burdened by a mission for the community. In the case of Sheikh Nazim Al-Haqqani, his specific mission as “the reviver, the renewer and the caller to God in the age of technology and material progress” has carved out for himself a niche peculiar to contemporary, modern life.

Shrouded among clouds of global uncertainties, natural disasters and widespread pandemics, the morose atmosphere pegged by perpetual crises has inevitably destabilized many into contemplations of existence. There lies a gaping void, which Giddens (1991) termed as the “ontological anxiety”, in dire need of redress. This thesis has shown how Sufism has functioned to provide a framework of answers through fate, faith and prophecy.

Aside the appeal to charismatic authority, the attraction of community is felt stronger now more than ever. Today, one witnesses the changing face of the
*tariqa* as it transforms from its loose and wide associations to tight and structured organizations. The consolidation of the *tariqa* reflects a renewed significance of the faith institution as it functions as a firm source of identity marker for its members. Also, the significance of the *tariqa* extends beyond the limits of its religious activities as members fraternize among themselves ensuring that the *tariqa* functions as a firm provider of social support.

8.1.4 Strategies of action

The “outsourcing” needs of religious leadership are not attributable merely to innovations in technology. This thesis unearthed that there appears to be a crisis of religious leadership for the upwardly mobile Muslims, who no longer identify with the current slew of local religious leaders. There are many reasons why this is the case. A respondent (F5) revealed that,

“While many among our religious leaders here are Malay educated, that is secondary to the fact that they are not… (thinks for a while) attractive to the younger crowd. I would say that it is partly due to a generational gap and simply because we come from different backgrounds. How many of them use the Internet? How many of them are on Facebook or Twitter? They don’t even use Powerpoint to teach (laughs). I may sound superficial but this is the truth. The gap between youths today and our religious teachers are widening.”

Another respondent (M3) revealed,

“Simple. Just attend any of the religious learning sessions conducted by the more ‘famous’ ustaz/ustazahs here, what do you see? You see old folks, most of them I would safely say are above 40 years old. Where are the younger crowd? They are not interested in this. But, when Arqam organizes a religious sermon at DBS building or something like that, you get the auditorium packed to the brim with young people, sometimes there are no seats even, and people have to stand. This is the future of religious learning here. If our ustaz/ustazahs don realize this, I
see that even our religious *service* in Singapore will have to import some “foreign talent” (laughs)” (italics mine).

Several factors among their admissions are interesting including the term “service” in describing religious teachers. When asked to elaborate on the term, my respondent goes on to remark,

“Of course religious leaders are providing a service. That is their job. That is their *amanah* (duty). Of course I am not comparing them to salesmen or what, but in a way they are providing us with something – like a “product”. And I am sorry, if your “product” is bad I will take my business elsewhere. So far Alhamdulillah I feel content with the Naqshbandi Haqqani. I think this is the right path for me and I will follow it for as long as it feels right.”

Here, the analogy of an economic transaction is apparent. Religious service is likened to an economic good, where demand and supply intersects at a point. While selected scholarship, such as the rational choice theorists, liken religion to an industry where there is demand and supply, the complex nature of religious adherence cautions of the danger of such a framework. However, this does not mean that it should be discarded entirely, lest we throw out the baby along with the bathwater. This study has revealed that the faithful are rational actors whose agency can be seen through their discerning choice of “membership” to a religious service. Respondents reveal that religious membership depends on language use, use of technology, content and more. The perceived lack of the above among current religious leaders in Singapore prompted them to look elsewhere and settle for the way of the Naqshbandi Haqqani.
Aside the shift in the node of influence, transnational religious movements surfaced yet another dynamics to contemporary religious membership. This pertains to the socio-economic affiliations to religious membership as best represented through the concept of the *habitus*. While these tools may be towards democratization, they do not prevail democratically. For example, tools of new media are privy to those with sufficient economic capital. This thesis has attempted to portray the changing dynamics of religious membership among the upwardly mobile. Contrary to traditional religious habits and practice, the young and the educated’s religious experience differ markedly as it is aligned to a middle-class orientation of piety.

The keener consolidation of *tariqa* membership reveals that there appears to be a rigorous discerning element behind voluntary membership to *tariqa*. The example of the Naqshbandi Haqqani and its savvy accoutrements has shown that it appeals to the cultural life-worlds of the upper and middle classes. Presumably so, the thesis has managed to trace the adaptable nature of the age-old *tariqa* as it adapts to material and cultural developments of faithfuls through time. Sufism, once a street experience has brandished a new face, one that is modern and cosmopolitan; Sufism that is decidedly – urban.

8.1.5 Resisting cultural “boxes”

The inextricability of ethnicity and religion is a peculiar burden to the Malay/Muslim. Boxed in as such, there is an inherent resoluteness of the
centrality of Islam in the lives of Malays. Regardless of personal positions, the
treatment of Malay/Muslim issues zeroes in on the religious value system. A
respondent (M6) remarked that,

“When you think of Islam, you think of Malay – at least for this part of the region. And that means being Malay, speaking the Malay language, practicing the Malay culture and so on. There is no impetus for someone who is not Malay to learn about Islam. It is closed off, exclusive, only for Malays. This is wrong. Islam is not only for Malays, it is for all of Mankind.”

The Naqshbandi Haqqani allows followers to witness a greater diversity of ethnic membership in the practice of religion. Chinese, Turks, Indians, Malays, Arabs are bounded by a common religion facilitated by a common language. The same respondent continues,

“With the Naqshbandi Haqqani, I don’t feel that Islam is closed off, that it is only for Malays, it is global. We are linked to the United States, to Europe, to the Middle East, to China.”

Religious practices traverse geographical and cultural boundaries. When probed to reveal why this is important to them, my respondent related that,

“Islam is a world religion, many of us forget about that. So when you get to associate with a global crowd, it feels good. You know that many people out there are sharing the same experiences as you. I am not saying that the “Malay crowd” is not good. I am just saying that global is better.”

Despite the above admission, it is also supplemented by remarks that the Malay/Muslim discourse on religion is shy of its Western counterparts, that there is still much to be learnt, books to be published and a variety of religious discourses to indulge in. Associating oneself with the global ummah widens one’s
repertoire of knowledge and at the same time empowers the Muslim individual.

What was striking was the following remark (F8),

“I buy books from Wardah bookstore and I share them with my
close friends who are not Malays. And I am able to do so, why? Because
it is written in English. All Singaporeans can speak English, right? I take
this as my *dakwah* (mission) for Islam. My friend enjoys the books I share
with him and sometimes he gives me books on Buddhism as well (which is
his friend’s faith).”

Islam, for my respondents, who experience them in the English language, is no
longer exclusive for the ethnically Malay. It is able to traverse ethnic bounds even
in this part of the region to provide for the ummah regardless of ethnicity or
background.

8.1.6 Adapting to the times

In conclusion, *tariqa* today has undergone a thorough facelift. The Naqshbandi
Haqqani example has shown how the *tariqa* has adapted to current mediums of
communication and modes of technology. Pessimist forecasters of religion, who
saw religion as unchanging and archaic seemed to have underestimated its ability
of changing through time. Its resilience can be seen through its successful
adaptation of new media technologies. Plugged into the cyber grid, the *tariqa*
extends its access to many – anytime, anywhere, multiplying its networks feeding a
frenzy of followers at the click of a button. Yet, while followers maintain that
these are but changes to form and not substance, it may not be entirely true.
To that end, the thesis has managed to tease some unforeseen impacts of contemporary adaptations to the tariqa. Among others, the role of the sheikh as traditionally conceived has radically changed. As his role changes, so does the pedagogical methods of traditional learning characteristic of the tariqa. As McLuhan previously observed, “the medium is the message”. Therefore, it would indeed be erroneous to assume that mere alterations to form will be without consequent effect on substance.

8.1.7 Future areas of exploration

At the close of this exercise, I found myself with more questions than answers. Admittedly so since religion and the individual is intertwined with many other social factors in a complex nexus. Contrary to the many romantic accounts of the spiritually lost and found, faith is not blind. It is this erroneous perception that leads many, even social scientists, to assume that religion is in the domain of the “irrational”. Faith is motivated by a slew of factors, from kinship ties, to ethnicity, to educational level, to class background, to age limit, to technology and the list continues.

That which struck me was, as the income gap widens among Muslims in Singapore, this will have a direct impact on religious experiences among different groups of Muslims. This significantly presents a conundrum for the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) who functions as the prescribed authority for Muslims in Singapore. As discussed previously, while MUIS has mandate over
infrastructure such as the mosques, madrasah, wakaf property etc., it does not have explicit mandate over religious discourses. In the case of an emerging market of religious discourses, where would MUIS position itself? In recent years, there have been attempts at influencing religious discourses through the MUIS Academy, Asatizah Recognition Scheme (ARS) and even a guidebook for asatizahs to deliver their sermons at mosques. Are these attempts reactionary and where would they lead to? These sites of action and reaction deserve an in-depth study in locating the tension and interplay of the struggle for religious authority in Singapore.

A future study that presents a comparison of the Naqshbandi Haqqani tariqa across several countries will also be useful to determine the extent to which global influences supersedes local considerations. Is this a matter that prevails throughout all zawiyahs, or is this peculiar to the Naqshbandi Haqqani Singapore? And if so, does Singapore’s limited boundaries, one that borders on geographical claustrophobia, inherently pushes people to look above and beyond? And if otherwise, is this a trend that persists across all zawiyahs, amalgamating towards a virtual community of believers. What will be the face of this congregation? How will it sustain for the future?

Future explorations could also look beyond the Naqshbandi Haqqani to survey other “imported” tariqas that have journeyed to Singapore. In my research, I was introduced to the Nur Ashki Jerrahi tariqa. They are “a community of dervishes within the Halveti-Jerrahi tariqa, in the specific lineage and spirit of Shaykh
Muzzafer Ashki al-Jerrahi, Syakh Nur al-Jerrahi, and Shaykha Fariha al-Jerrahi. They are based at Dergah al-Farah in New York City, with zawiyahs throughout the United States and Mexico. Here in Singapore, they commune every Friday night at a shophouse along Kembangan Road. They begin their session with prayers and dzikr to Allah and the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) followed by qasidah (songs of praise and worship) in English. They have a modest following, attendance include both Muslims and non-Muslims, strikingly made up of youths below 30 years old. This example is one of possibly many more that have sprouted on the landscape of tariqa and Islamic religiosity in Singapore. It points to a changing trend, one that deserves further inquiry.

In conclusion, tariqas are not spared from weathering the test of time. Contrary to popular perception, its sustenance hinges upon its ability to stay relevant to the changing society. Above and beyond the study of tariqa, this thesis has uncovered the ways in which the religious experience of Islam in Singapore has changed thorough time. While religion is often perceived as the domain of tradition and continuity, this thesis has shown that agents do make choices within constrained options. It is within the dynamics of choice and strategies of action that the full experience and significance of religion are played out to the ends of sustaining a community of faithful.

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60 Of particular interest, the tariqa is co-led by a female Syakha. How this factor is negotiated among followers of tariqa, who are conventionally led by a male Syakh, and the impact it has on considerations on gender and Islam is an area of exciting inquiry.

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## APPENDIX ONE

Details of respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent Code</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Educational Qualifications</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Level of Involvement</th>
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62 Female and male respondents indicated by F and M respectively.
APPENDIX TWO

*Silsilah* (genealogy) of the Naqshbandi Haqqani.
APPENDIX THREE

A nifty handout summarizing the practices of the Naqshbandi Haqqani Singapore and provides links to more information.
APPENDIX FOUR

A representation of the poster found at my primary respondent’s office.
APPENDIX FIVE

Naqshbandi Haqqani zawiyahs around the world.

Accessed:

APPENDIX SIX

Online *bay'ah*.

Accessed: