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Wires of Wisdom: Orally, Literally, and Experientially Transmitted Spiritual Traditions In The Digital Age

Abstract: This article is discussing the possibilities of new media technologies in the context of transmitting ancient spiritual traditions in various cultural and religious backgrounds. The use of internet as a means to preserve the orally transmitted knowledge of the Aboriginals and Maoris, and in doing so transferring their cultural heritage to their younger generations and interest groups. Following is an extended case study of the Naqshbandi Sufi Order and its specific compatibility of a traditional orientation towards spiritual work among people rather than monastic seclusion and its recent application of digital media resources. Therefore, new technology is being discussed as a logical extension, not without attention being drawn to possible limitations, however.

Keywords: Internet, Digital Media, Culture, Tradition, Religion, Sufism

Introduction

Interestingly, in some cases, environmental factors have led to cultural oddities where language is concerned. For instance, the whistled language developed as a type of oral communication to convey the tonal and rhythmic patterns of syllables over vast distances. Worthy of note, the small isolated town of Kuşköy (its actual translation means Bird Village) in the mountainous Black Sea region of Turkey, has puzzled linguists with the development of what its locals call *kuş dili*, the bird language. The whistled language can be heard for more than half a mile in distance amid rural background noise barriers and adapts standard Turkish

syllables into distinct acoustic signals. To demonstrate, the question *Do you have fresh bread?* which in Turkish means *Taze ekmek var mı?* is represented by six separate whistles made by fingers, tongue and teeth.

However, the centuries old practice of bird language is coming to an end in Kuşköy. Once, children had learnt to communicate via whistling before enrolling at school; men and women argued, gossiped and indeed even courted by whistling. Now, however, this form of communication is in rapid decline from daily life, replaced by texting – without a doubt, a far more appropriate mode for such private matters. Under the umbrella of culture and tourism, the town of Kuşköy has held whistling competitions in a bid to rekindle interest in youths. Yet, time and time again, these efforts proved unsuccessful. It appears that cultural preservation is at a loss when faced with the practical needs of today and the advancement of the digital age. (Nijhuis, 2015).

Or is it?

As reported by Reed (1993), according to Professor T.G.H. Strehlow in his studies of the indigenous peoples of Australia, the Aranda tribe in particular, he found a fundamental disunity amongst the Central Australian inhabitants. This disunion, in general terms, does not only account for differences from one tribe to another, but encompasses the differences within the same tribe as well. As a matter of fact, smaller groups and sub-groups of the same tribe have been known to show disunity extending to various customs, ritualistic ceremonies and religious interpretations. Again Reed (1993, p. 69) refers to Strehlow's observation:

> *There is no common system of religion which is embraced by the tribe as a whole; all legends – and hence all ceremonies, since the latter are always dramatizations of portions of the legends – are tied down to definite local centers in each group.' In other words, although myths may marginally or extensively diversify in content, they still possess enough common traits to be part of their universal belief in relation to the ancestral Spirit of the Dream-Time.*

Close observation reveals fascinating differences between the Australian Aboriginals and the Maori people of New Zealand in terms of cultural development. Removed by some 2,000 kilometers of ocean and contrasting ethnological features, the Maori people of New Zealand had developed a distinct monotheistic religion – the cult of Io. According to their esoteric beliefs, Io was the Supreme Being, or the creator and the uncreated, the omniscient and omnipotent. Soon, they instigated a specific system of hierarchy: sacred knowledge was

conceded to a higher priestly class known as the Tohunga, whilst members of lower priestly orders were exempt from the Word. Furthermore, whether ordinary people were even permitted to know the name of Io remains an uncertainty. Apart from the higher classes, the common people were disallowed from attending these ceremonies (Reed, 1993).

The ritual chants and practices were guarded in utmost secrecy and, at present, nothing definitive can still be relayed about them. Indeed, the disciplinary precautions of the Tohunga ensured the cult was not open to all. Allegedly, those classed as ordinary minds were unable to appreciate the wisdom and had to be kept at bay. Therefore, only the higher minds of the community who possessed noteworthy abstraction and introspection were granted participatory license. Interestingly, no temple or sacred building was ever erected in the name of Io. The gatherings or ceremonies were conducted in open air, the location always hidden from outsiders. Thus, with no noticeable address or distinguishing invite, the so-called ordinary minds were left to seek inferior and more approachable deities that were considered suitable to their capabilities and sense. That some of these lower gods were associated with black magic, or makutu, served to justify the proper exclusiveness of the Io cult (Best, 1976).

As documented by Britsch (1981), by the 1850s, the majority of Maoris were converted to Roman Catholic and Protestant Christianity. This was followed by Latter-day Saint missionary work. In 1887 there were 2,573 Latter-day Saints, and by the turn of the century they were almost four thousand members of the Church in New Zealand. As stated by Britsch in 1981 (para. 4): *Most of the Maori tribes, including large numbers in the north, around Whangarei and Bay of Islands, had been introduced to the gospel. In 1901 there were 79 branches. Clearly, since the early years in Hawaii, the Church had not enjoyed so much success with a Polynesian people*.

Today the majority of Maori are Christians. However, electronic media has awakened interest in youths towards their traditional pantheon of gods and the cult of Io with very pleasing results. Indeed, Kiwa Digital's Nga Atua Maori series has enjoyed growing popularity in their digital comics and graphic novellas. The programs offer Maori and English audio with synchronized text, visual effects, musical accompaniment and is available from App Store and Google Play (www.kiwadigital.com). Steven Renata, Kiwa Digital's global business development director, highlighted their intentions as 'a great opportunity to honor the culture of our indigenous folk in Aotearoa, but also contemporize the messaging and the meaning.' According to Renata, this new digital format not only delivers high quality content in an

engaging way to Maori youth in New Zealand, as thousands of downloads attest, but has ignited interest in the cult of Io abroad, thus accumulating international market value as well (Gillies, 2015).

The Australian Aboriginals, in some ways, were not as fortunate as the Maori people. The Maoris of New Zealand enjoyed a more agreeable climate with bounteous supplies of birds and fish, the availability of bracken root during all seasons, and plantations of sweet potato originally brought from the tropical islands of the Pacific. Without a doubt, the abundance of food collected from forests, lakes, rivers and the sea emboldened the need for settlement. In turn, these settlements naturally encouraged common language. Stemming from this togetherness, the passing centuries also saw the development of a somewhat singular culture, which today is called maoritanga. On the other hand, the harsh physical terrain and climate of Australia led to a heavily disjointed form of communication (or in some instances totally bereft of) amongst its native population. The mostly nomadic tribes, scattered over a wide area of barren and hostile territory, had no other alternative than to adapt to the conditions and attune to the grueling surroundings. The vastness of the environment, together with its rigid slopes and formations, officiated as a barrier between the peoples. As a result, this separation and remoteness instigated an evolution of language variations and dialects, thus, further escalating the isolation of tribal communities from each other. It must be noted that some sources estimate over 200 different dialects.
As noted by Ross (1986), between 1824 and 1859 in the Hunter Valley, New South Wales, L.E. Threlkeld surveyed that the Indigenous peoples had no priesthood, no notion of an altar, no sacrifice, nor any religious service, and that their superstitious observances can scarcely be designated as divine rites, being only mysterious works of darkness, revellings and such like. Nevertheless, Threlkeld continued, the Indigenous tribes were not left without some instinctive feeling of dependence on the great Unknown Being. Moreover, due to the absence of temples or institutionalized religious peers, Threlkeld viewed Aboriginal sacred ceremonies comprised of singing, dancing and the painting of totemic icons as a kind of sport rather than a religious service (Ross, 1986).

One must admit that although collections of Aboriginal myths are extensive during the early colonial era to the mid-1920s, the collectors themselves were generally amateurs. Those described as semi-professional like Daisy Bates (1893-1951) were sadly bereft of formal linguistic skills and were un-schooled in the art of recording variant versions of oral

traditions. Whether scriptural text or newsprint, we live in a world dominated by the written word and largely book-bound academic research. Hence, the physical object of the 'sacred book' far eclipses the modus operandi of older communication, the oral. As the English essayist Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) puts it: *I cannot see that lectures can do so much good as reading the books from which the lectures are taken', thus validating the superiority of text as the primary source of knowledge as opposed to verbally transmitted information based on the text itself* (Boswell, 1999, p. 255).

As given by Graham (1987, p. 12), according to German historian and philosopher Oswald Spengler (1880-1936) *the word is a possession of man generally, whereas writing belongs exclusively to the cultured*. As can be deduced, Spengler ascertains the accepted Western viewpoint: the oral is simple and primitive, whilst the written word has become scholarly, and thus, the main engine of civilized advancement. Consequently, language can be associated with culture, but writing is allied with civilization.

In terms of massive information storage, the human mind cannot compete with volumes of texts. In general, the written is permanent, whilst the oral is in danger of being semi-permanently transferred at best, or forgotten at worst. Arguably, there are exceptions: the practice of the Hafiz (male) or Hafiza (female) in Islam, those who have accurately memorized the Qur'an word-for-word. However, it must be noted that they are committing to memory written text, not oral myths. The situation changes vastly concerning the Aboriginals of Australia. The fact that oral tradition can be changed, exaggerated or forgotten through great spans of time, the reliance on sometimes dubious documentation by semi-professionals, and the realization of diversity oftentimes within the same tribe, can be viewed as part of the destiny of communities who have not left behind a written source. In today's digital age, where Aboriginal youth have embraced the use of mobile technology, there are significant movements to assert their culture through digital applications online. The establishing of the storytelling app replaces the traditional oral first-person chronicler with a more synergetic, community-based participatory network. The emergence of digital resources has allowed Indigenous youth to combine stories with images, text and sound – uploaded and shared, facilitating constant interaction with producers and users with minimal outside mediation. Furthermore, this custom-made mobile application is also a positive contribution towards literacy skills, social connectedness and exchange of knowledge within the Aboriginal community.

To summarize, social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube have become valuable platforms generated by user-content. The escalating use of social media has shaped this connectivity into an effective resource. In turn, this development has led to a type of co-evolvement with the public that has become social media dependent. In other words, social practices and engagements are heavily influenced by technology; with the introduction of the telegram, communication emerged in the form of short messages sent over the wire, whilst the telephone enhanced cultural and everyday communication by longer oral interactions regardless of distance. Today, however, wireless communication has enabled one to be constantly in touch regardless of location, carrying the office in your pocket, inventing a new society of addicted networkers, and leaving little time for recreation.

Previously, the oral traditions were viewed as primitive and lost in preservation, whilst the written saw acceptance as means of civilization. Those traditions such as the cult of Io of the Maoris were seen as exclusive to a specific group of priests and initiates. However, today, with the aid of technology we are able to observe an easy form of participation on a wider scale concerning the community. The digital era also secures a revival in those oral traditions which are in danger of being gradually erased or recorded inaccurately. This positive development not only preserves cultural roots and identity, but also promotes communication through internet shares to like-minded individuals, and researchers who intend to explore these ancient beliefs. Moreover, smartphone applications in the case of Kiwa Digital have played a significant role in extending cultural identity through electronic science to attract the interest of youths. In other words, those unwritten traditions that once were frowned upon during the era of book-bound knowledge have now found a place in the digital era to advance and express. It appears that the general opinion of the trustworthiness of the written and the unreliability of the oral are now challenged in this respect. Of course, to what extent remains to be seen. Yet, one thing is certain - the powerful influence of technology has led to a co-evolvement of society in the past, and shall continue to do so in the expansive world of communication. However, already we are witnessing signs that those best able to adapt to the digital environment stand a stronger chance to sustain and move forward.

Naqshbandi Sufism in the 21. Century

When it comes to Sufism – the mystical dimension of Islam – one of its most visible

representations in the digital media universe is the worldwide active Naqshbandi Sufi brotherhood, operating official multimedia channels such as *saltanat.org* and *sufilive.com* as well as countless authorized and unauthorized websites and social media profiles (Stjernholm, 2011).

Although it might seem strange to some to drag inward-directed spiritual contemplation from a monastic cell into the bright spotlight of the world-wide web (Milani & Possamai, 2013), when it comes to the specific nature of the Naqshbandi Sufi Order there might be a certain logic behind it.

As opposed to most of the other more than forty different Sufi ways or *tariqats,* an integral and distinguishing part of the principles of the Naqshbandiyya was introduced by the Order's grandmaster in the thirteenth century – Shaykh Abdel Khaleq al Ghujduwani – and consists in the practice of spiritual contemplation in the presence of others instead of isolated introspective retreats (Kabbani, 2004b).

Weismann (2007) interprets the literary translation as *solitude in the crowd* as a paradox, implying that the spiritual master should involve himself in the social and political affairs of his community.
He further goes on to explain the unmatched scholarly attention directed towards the Naqshbandiyya among all the Sufi brotherhoods during the course of the last three decades with (Weismann, 2007, Preface, xii): *the realization that in the eight centuries or so of its existence masters affiliated with the Naqshbandi tradition* (...) *time and again acquired positions of influence with the rulers of the day and within their respective communities.*

In other words, Sufism can be considered as an important influence in framing the Muslim world's response to modernity.

Weismann (2007, Abstract) credits the Naqshbandi masters with the successful adoption of *new strategies to cope with the challenges of modernity and postmodernity* and defines the specific strength of the Order *in its characteristic combination of strict adherence to the divine law and active involvement in social and political affairs*.

Another strong principle referred to by Weismann that has been employed by Shaykh Ubaydullah Ahrar - the order's Grandmaster during the fifteenth century – is a ritualized teaching method consisting in communal discourse of spontaneous nature or *suhba* (Lizzio,

2007, p. 20), which might serve as a logical explanation and legitimation of online missionary activities as well.

In so far it should not be too surprising to hear that the followers of the *Haqqani*-branch of the Naqshbandiyya nowadays even have the possibility to consult *e-shaykh.com* for spiritual and religious advice.

Shaykh Nazim and the outward-orientation of the Order

Named after Cyprus-born Shaykh Nazim Adil al-Haqqani, who is listed as the fortieth master in a chain of inheritance of the Order's leadership (Kabbani, 2004), the widespread and highly accessible *Haqqani*-branch of the brotherhood managed to establish permanent centers and fellowships in Western Europe and North America (Böttcher, 2006; Damrel, 2006). It must be noted that the remarkable dedication and charismatic personality of its leader has been preserved in numerous written works, on audio-tapes and video-recordings (Raudvere & Stenberg, 2008). Therefore it should not be surprising that even after his physical departure in 2014, Shaykh Nazim is continuing to attract people to his spiritual way through countless archived live-streams and social media profiles (Stjernholm, 2015).

When Weismann (2007) acknowledges the Shaykh's ability to accommodate *the Sufi path to the current realities of globalization* (2007, p. 3), he is considering it as the continuation of a historical pattern that made the grandmasters of the order throughout the centuries modify and adjust their teachings to their socio-political environment - and often enough actively shaping it. As pointed out by Yemelianova (2001, p. 663):

> *By the eighteenth century, the majority of Muslims of the eastern North Caucasus were Sufis.* (...) *The Russian invasion of the North Caucasus in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries stimulated political and military functions of tariqatism which were not characteristic of mainstream Sufism. The Naqshbandi tariqa provided a mobilizing framework for resistance to Russian expansion in the region.*

Furthermore, the active role of the Order in military resistance is stressed by the examples of Chechen Naqshbandi master Shaykh Mansur Ushurma – who, during the eighteenth century *united the Chechens and various peoples of Dagestan into an anti-Russian political-military*

union (Yemelianova, 2001, p. 663) – as well as the declaration of a Shari'a-based Islamic territory by the Naqshbandi-affiliated Imam Shamyl in the nineteenth century (2001, p. 663):

> *The Naqshbandi shaykhs and their disciples led the military resistance to the Russians. Ever since, the Naqshbandiis have maintained their active involvement in politics. Under the conditions of extreme polyethnicity and persistent external threat, tariqatism served as a viable basis for the political unification of the North Caucasus*.

As a matter of fact, the spreading of the Naqshbandi teachings in the Western world started already during the first half of the 20th century, when Shaykh Nazim's predecessor, Shaykh Abdullah ad-Daghestani attracted spiritual seekers such as Georges Ivanowitch Gurdjieff (Kabbani, 2004a, p. 435) to his lodge in Damascus or the Gurdjieff-student John G. Bennett, who according to Rawlinson (1993) met the Grandmaster in Beirut, 1955. Both of them have conveyed Sufi-affiliated thought to considerable audiences in Western capitals. According to Damrel (1999) it is the fellowship of the then deceased Bennett who encouraged the opening of the first Naqshbandi-Haqqani-center in London.

Considering that Shaykh Nazim was sent by his master back to Cyprus during the Second World War with the mission to establish centers in Western Europe, one might assume that the Order's latest missionary activities on the internet might have been more approved than condemned as well, since – as Weismann (2007, p. 4) puts it: *Intoxicated mystics have always rejoiced in the bliss of the annihilation of their self in the One, while sober mystics like the Naqshbandis put the stress on their subsistence in order to return to this world and guide others on the same journey.*

Another point to consider that sets the Naqshbandiyya apart from other Sufi brotherhoods is their accessibility - meaning for example that the prescribed daily routine of worship is full of special practices and invocations that are handed down in other Orders in a much more selective and exclusive manner (Kabbani, 2004b). Considering Weismann's remark that *the circulation of manuals for Sufi-conduct and -practices in the tenth and eleventh century helped turn the small groups of spiritual masters and disciples hitherto gathering in privacy into more formal associations with wider social appeal* (2007, p. 5), the embarking of the Naqshbandiyya in the world of social media might just be the legitimate next step in a tradition of orthodoxy and activism that managed to expand from its birthplace Buchara in Central Asia to worldwide recognition (Hermansen, 2009).

Therefore, the question is: would the trans-migratory nature of digital media content really be able to convey the sophisticated and intensive teaching that is several centuries deep?

The compatibility of old traditions and new media

It already has been mentioned that there are more than forty different Sufi orders as well as countless off-springs and each one of them applies different methods and techniques of teaching, from strict seclusions and vows of silence to trance-induction and self-mutilation (Trimingham, 1998).

As has been indicated by Mahyuddin, Stapa, and Badaruddin (2013, p. 6) with reference to Wan Suleiman: (…) *the tariqah is interpreted literally as medium and road and technically medium means whatever can deliver to the purpose. It is analogized as the car used to go to the purposed destination.*

Considering this pragmatic view, why not take a shortcut on the digital media highway to deliver the purpose more efficiently? But, then again, what is the purpose of the Naqshbandi Sufi Order?

At this point it is important to note that Sufi brotherhoods in general and the Naqshbandiyya in particular never saw themselves as the keepers and transmitters of book knowledge (Lizzio, 2007, p. 2). As a matter of fact, highly influential scholastic writings from authors such as Ghazali (Gardener, 2007) or Ibn Arabi (Corbin, 2008), as well as the poetic output of Rumi (Friedlander, 1992) has been characteristically done by individuals not necessarily associated or affiliated with Sufi Orders during the course of their lives.

The brotherhoods on the other hand have been traditionally more practically oriented towards the refinement of behavior and conduct (Papas, 2008). It is noteworthy in this context that in one of his last lectures Shaykh Nazim on saltanat.org (http://saltanat.org/videopage.php?id=7299&name=2013-04-08_tr_IbnArabiHz.mp4) declared to his followers that they have no permission to actually get involved with the theoretical writings of Ibn Arabi since he considered it of no use for them or even dangerous, given the limited understanding of his

students. Consequently, the display of knowledge without the mastering of one's manners has been judged by the Shaykh on numerous occasions as being of no value.

As opposed to traditional *madrasa* and institutions where students would be introduced to Shari'a-based knowledge of *Quran*, jurisdiction and *Hadith*-science, the *tariqas* focused on the teaching of good manners and proper conduct – in other words, practical knowledge that can't be learned from books but must be experienced (Papas, 2008).

Although stressing the importance of Shari'a-derived book knowledge in order to be able to follow its requirements, Mahyuddin, Stapa, and Badaruddin (2013) highlight the practical aspect of the learning in the context of a Sufi order or *tariqa* as follows (2013, p. 3) : (...) *the shari'ah is a worship to God by carrying out His commands and avoiding His vetoes, the tariqah is the practice of the knowledge* (...)

They further conclude and point out the importance of the master's guidance when they state that the Sufi order *comprises an orderly ritual, rite, pattern of striving and exercise under the shaykh to educate and control evil carnal soul* (...) *as a source of immoral qualities* (Mahyuddin, Stapa & Badaruddin, 2013, p. 6)

Even though the relevance of the *suhba* as a method of oral instruction has been stressed before, it is more than just the words that are responsible for the formation of the student in the Naqshbandi Sufi way. The student relies deeply on his guide to give an example of excellent behavior and mainly learns by trying to imitate that conduct (Stjernholm, 2011) or, as Massoudi (2002, p. 150) puts it (referring to assumptions of master-disciple relationships in various traditions): (…) *a perfect teacher is like a mirror, reflecting everything back so that the student can see himself/herself.*

Hereby, the quality in the transmission of information between spiritual teacher and student is likened to being as trans-missive as a glass window.
As Lizzio (2007, p. 4) criticized, most relevant anthropological treatments of the matter *neglected the central importance of the shaikh's charisma to the process of spiritual transformation* and – guided by structuralist/functionalist theory – *they stressed the social context shaping belief in the shaikh's charismatic power* by following the analysis of Weber, who *defined charisma as the power of holy men over their followers and was uninterested in*

the precise nature of the holy man's exceptional powers and as *a sociologist, he was more intrigued by the social consequences of the holy man-follower relationship that grew out of charisma* (2007, p. 4).

Even if Shaykh Abdullah ad-Daghestani and Shaykh Nazim did urge their listeners to take written notes of their lectures, we might assume that this was done to ensure the preservation of the speeches for a future audience as well as to provide recursive study possibilities. Therfore, written documentation of the lectures seems to be of less relevance, given the systematic recordings on audio-visual media.

And although Lizzio (2007, p. 7) argues that *Sufis maintain detailed biographies of the teachers and that these accounts of their lives also contain didactic tales and instructive sayings to be applied in everyday life*, concluding that *Naqshbandi Sufism constitutes a cumulative tradition, orally, literally, and experientially* it has to be taken into consideration that almost all respective written work deals with practical aspects of the teachers lives or serves to demonstrate their exemplary conduct and behavior (Kabbani, 2004a).

Considering all these efforts to preserve and remember the habitual routine of the masters as a guiding reference, one might even suggest that the main vehicle for progress on the way of the Naqshbandi Sufi Order might be rather to imitate the good manners or *adab* displayed by the Shaykh than to receive – either orally or literally – transmitted initiation (Papas, 2008).

Lizzio himself delivers a possible explanation for the validity of that assumption when he points out that as opposed to other Orders that trace their origins back to the Prophet Muhammed through his grandson and fourth *khalif* 'Ali ibn abi Talib, the Naqshbandiyya claims to refer back to the first *khalif* Abu Bakr as well in the course of an attempt to explain the twin aspects of the Naqshbandi practice – combining esoteric and exoteric elements – and their unusual involvement in wordly affairs (2007, p. 7):
(...) *the 'Alid chain represents the esoteric spiritual practices, while the Bakri link signifies strict adherence to the shari'a and the exemplary behavior of the Prophet.*

Therefore, in the case of the Naqshbandi Sufi way, it would be uncharacteristic to apply the concept of a socio-religious cultural practice which is based on the written word. Instead one might even suggest to use the term *aural* tradition – since the presence of the master is crucial

in this method (Massoudi, 2002). Considering that the Arabic term *suhba* is derived from companionship, the personal presence and unwavering focus of the listener is of utmost importance for this spiritual flow to be established and maintained. (Papas, 2008, p. 12).

One might assume that this specific setting will probably fail to be re-staged in a live-stream-situation (Silverstein, 2008). However, it might serve as a first contact with the teachings of the Order. In a similar sense the former deputy of Shaykh Nazim, Shaykh Hisham Kabbani, for a long time offered on his website *sufilive.com* the possibility to receive online-initiation to the order but stressed that it should be renewed if possible with Shaykh Nazim himself or authorized deputies in physical form.

Despite the vast online-presence of the once locally-restricted and secretive brotherhoods preserving mystical Islam (Hermansen, 2009), nobody should expect to undergo a distance learning Sufi training. Nevertheless, although online activities may be limited in its capacity to transmit the full scope of inherent content, it might prove to be of importance in countering the well-organized propaganda from fundamentalist movements like Saudi Arabian-sponsored *wahhabi*-sect, its *salafi*-offspring or extremist groups like *jihad*-organisations (Silverstein, 2008). One just needs to consider the strategies of the Russian government to use Sufism in Chechnya in order to push back what they consider the US/Saudi-financed influence of *wahhabi* thought (Yemelianova, 2003).

Especially for the growing number of new Muslims the first contact with Islam might be crucial and, often enough one click can make the difference between embracing a message of love, tolerance, respect and correcting your own flaws or being lured into anger, bitterness, violence-promoting ideas and self-styled missionary work to correct others who are supposed to be wrong (Karim, 2002; Raudvere & Stenberg, 2008).

At this point there are several official digital media-channels offering archived audio- and video-lectures of Shaykh Nazim as well as his son and successor Shaykh Mehmet Adil ar-Rabbani (Stjernholm, 2015) and live-broadcasts of the Friday prayer in the Order's center in Lefke/Cyprus (saltanat.org, hakkani.org).

Sufilive.com is keeping track of the scholarly and missionary activities of Shaykh Hisham Kabbani as well as broadcasting his lectures and weekly congregations in his center in Fenton/Michigan (Damrel, 2006).

Conclusion

In our fast developing times, digital media continues to secure boundless access to resources in the name of research and knowledge such as strenuous study, leisurely informative readings, cultural and identity preservation, and of course, food to the inquisitive mind. What can be seen in advancement is a growing database that can chiefly satisfy the need to retain cultural information and transfer it online using various tools and devices to attract youth on an interactive level in some indigenous societies.

Likewise, not so dissimilar tools can be and are employed by the Naqshbandiyya to sustain their online presence. Easy accessibility at the users own pace and time, coupled with the drive to intergroup learning and digestible pieces of complex traditional knowledge are effective avenues to reach today's eyes and ears.

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