

# Istanbul Tekkes And Their Historical Development

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**Abstract:** Relations between Central Asia and the Ottoman Empire have centuries-old roots. Tekkes occupied a distinct place in trade, cultural, and socio-economic interactions between the two fraternal peoples. This article provides an overview of the Istanbul tekkes, their history, development, and their contemporary condition.

**Keywords:** Ottoman Empire, Sufism, Central Asian Khanates, tekke, Nakshbandiya, Bukhara Khanate, Istanbul tekkes, dervishes.

**Introduction:** The Shaykh Muhammad Murad Bukhari Tekke, located in the Hazrat Khalid (Eyübsultan) district—considered the heart of Istanbul—is the first center of the Mujaddidiyya branch of the Nakshbandiya order on Anatolian territory. Initially constructed in the mid-17th century by Dâmâd Mustafa of Çankırı, the Anadolu Kazaskeri, as a madrasa, the building was later converted into a tekke by his son, Shaykh al-Islam Dâmâdzâde Abulkhayr Ahmad, and dedicated to Shaykh Muhammad Murad Bukhari.[1] Over various periods, additions and structural changes transformed the tekke into a complex that exerted significant influence on the surrounding society.

Shaykh Muhammad Murad Bukhari, after whom the tekke is named, bore the nisbas Bukhari, Muradi, and Nakshbandi. The later-added epithets “Munzawi” and “Monawi,” however, were incorrectly attributed and are not historically accurate.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a comparative analysis of various sources, including travelogues written by migrants, historical works produced by chroniclers of the 16th–19th centuries, memoirs of Muslims undertaking the Hajj, archival materials, as well as official documents, reports, and tombstone inscriptions preserved in existing tekkes. Statistical, biographical, and historical-comparative methods were applied in the preparation of this article.

## DISCUSSION

Afflicted with childhood paralysis at the age of three,

which rendered his legs immobile, Muhammad Murad’s condition did not hinder his pursuit of knowledge or his mission of spiritual guidance. As a shaykh who combined scholarship with religious instruction, he was among the people of kashf (spiritual unveiling). He informed the sultan that several Companions of the Prophet were buried in the Qurşunlu Cemetery in Istanbul’s Galata district, which subsequently led to the restoration and revitalization of that area. Today, this site is widely known as the “Underground Mosque” (Yeralti Camii).

Muhammad Murad ibn ‘Ali al-Husayni al-Bukhari an-Nakshbandi, the earliest representative of the Mujaddidiyya branch of the Nakshbandiya order in Anatolia, was born in Samarkand in 1640 CE (1050 AH).[2] He was the son of Sayyid ‘Ali, the naqib al-ashraf of Samarkand, and became widely known by the epithet “al-Bukhari,” derived from his father’s lineage.

Also referred to by the epithet “al-Muradi,” his name appears in the gravestone inscriptions within the tekke courtyard (hazira) and in the documents preserved in Ottoman archives as “al-Bukhari” and “al-Nakshbandi.”

The epithet “al-Munzawi,” sometimes incorrectly attributed to Shaykh Muhammad Murad Bukhari, is absent from earlier sources and appears to have emerged from later confusion. This misattribution seems to stem from accounts concerning a now-lost mausoleum named “Munzawi,” located in the Karasüleymansubaşı quarter of Eyüp. In reality, the Shaykh Muhammad Murad Bukhari Tekke is situated in the Nishonja (Nişoncu) neighborhood of Eyübsultan.

Afflicted with childhood paralysis at the age of three, which left his legs impaired, Muhammad Murad did not allow this condition to impede his pursuit of knowledge or his duties in spiritual guidance. After completing his foundational Islamic education and memorization of the Qur'an in Samarkand, he traveled to India in 1663 to continue his studies.

In India, he affiliated (*intisāb*) with Muhammad Ma'sūm—son and spiritual successor of Imām Rabbānī Aḥmad Fārūq Sirhindī (d. 1624), the founder of the Nakshbandiya-Mujaddidiyya order—and eventually became one of his deputies. (The term *intisāb*, an Arabic word, refers to affiliating oneself with a person or group. In a Sufi context, it denotes joining a shaykh or a Sufi order as a disciple, entering his spiritual lineage, and following his guidance on the path of inner refinement.)

After receiving permission from his shaykh, Muhammad Murad Bukhari set out for the Hajj pilgrimage in 1664. Following the Hajj, he remained in the Hijaz for three years, studying under local scholars. After performing Hajj for a second time in 1668, he stayed for a period in Cairo, Egypt, where he engaged in the study of *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, and the rational sciences.

Two years later, he arrived in Greater Syria (Damascus), where he married and had two sons: Muhammad Bahā' al-Dīn and Mustafa.

Highly respected by the people of Damascus, Murad al-Bukhari was invited with great insistence by Istanbul's aristocracy. In 1681 he traveled to Istanbul, where he was received with great enthusiasm by scholars and statesmen. Under the leadership of Shaykh al-Islam Feyzullah Efendi (d. 1703), many scholars pledged spiritual allegiance (*intisāb*) to Shaykh Murad, and it was he who laid the foundations of the Nakshbandiya-Mujaddidiyya tradition in Anatolia.[3]

During his residence in Istanbul, he lived in the Nishonchi (Nişoncu) quarter of the Eyübsultan district. It was during this period that the current tekke was assigned to him by Shaykh al-Islam Dâmâdzâde Abulkhayr Ahmad (d. 1742).

Five years later, he appointed his deputy, "Kilisli Ali" (d. 1734), in his place and first traveled back to Damascus, and then continued on to perform the 'Umrah pilgrimage. A year later, in 1686, he returned once more to Damascus.

Shaykh Muhammad Murad Bukhari passed away on the night of Tuesday, 21 February 1720 (12 Rabi' al-Akhir 1132 AH). The congregation attending his funeral overflowed the Eyübsultan (Hazrat Khalid) Mosque and its courtyard, causing the gathered multitude to remain unable to move for a long time.[4]

Having concluded an arduous life of eighty years, he was buried in the teaching chamber (*dershane*) of his tekke in the Nishonchi square. Beside him lies Kilisli Ali (d. 1734), the second shaykh of the tekke.

Despite his physical disability, Shaykh Murad Bukhari devoted his life to the pursuit of knowledge and spiritual guidance. He traveled extensively—visiting Samarkand, India, Jerusalem, the Hijaz, Baghdad, Isfahan, Balkh, Bukhara, Cairo, Damascus, Istanbul, Bursa, and many other cities—fulfilling his mission of scholarship and spiritual instruction wherever he went.

#### Works:

- **Jāmi' Mufradāt al-Qur'ān.** Written in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, this work concerns the sciences of the Qur'an. It consists of two volumes and remains unpublished, although manuscript copies are preserved.

- **Silsilat al-Dhahab.** A short manuscript treatise on Sufism, written in Arabic. Several commentaries and translations of this work exist.

- **Maktūbāt.** A collection of letters written by Shaykh Murad al-Bukhari in Arabic, preserved in manuscript form. The collection was compiled by his disciples after his death.

- **Lubs al-Khirqa al-Qādiriyya.** This Arabic treatise contains Shaykh Muhammad Murad al-Bukhari's authorization (*ijāzat-nāma*) in the Qādiriyya order, outlining his spiritual chain (*silsila*) reaching back to Imam 'Ali (may Allah ennoble his face).

- **Masmu'āt min al-Sayyid Muhammad Murad al-Bukhari.** A manuscript in Turkish, compiled from the recorded discourses of Shaykh Murad al-Bukhari, dealing with various aspects of Sufi teaching.

- **Manāqib wa Taqrīrāt-i Muhammad Murad al-Bukhari.** A Turkish work formed on the basis of notes taken during Shaykh Murad al-Bukhari's discourses in Bursa.

- **Risāla-i Nakshbandiya.** A Turkish treatise consisting of Shaykh Muhammad Murad al-Bukhari's discourses in Bursa, recorded by Karababazade Ibrahim Bursa'vi. In many library catalogues, it is incorrectly attributed to Karababazade Ibrahim himself.[5]

**The Shaykh Muhammad Murad Bukhari Tekke.** Located in the Nishonchi Mustafa Pasha neighborhood, on Davud Ağa Street (No. 153, 1st alley), this tekke—known by the names "Shaykh Muhammad Murad Bukhari," "Shaykh Murad Bukhari," and "Shaykh Murad Efendi"—was originally built as a madrasa in the mid-17th century by the Anatolian Kazasker Dâmâd Mustafa of Çankırı (d. 1684). It was later converted into a tekke by his son, the Shaykh al-Islam Dâmâdzâde Abulkhayr Ahmad (d. 1742), and dedicated to Shaykh Muhammad

Murad Bukhari. Over the centuries, additional structures were incorporated, and various restoration works were carried out.

The Shaykh Murad Tekke operated within the framework of the Nakshbandiya-Mujaddidiyya order and held a prominent position during the tenure of Ra'is al-Mashāyikh Feyzullah Efendi (d. 1867). A total of fourteen shaykhs served in this tekke, the last of whom was Abd al-Qadir Balkhī. Although he belonged to the Nakshbandiya-Mujaddidiyya lineage, he later adopted the Hamzawīyya-Malāmiyya orientation.[6]

Once possessing gardens spacious enough for deer to roam freely, the complex was abandoned following the closure of tekkes and zawiya. The Shaykh Murad Tekke was occupied and damaged by various individuals; its wooden salāmkhāna and ḥaram buildings were completely demolished in 1977 by local residents, who used the timber as firewood. Additionally, the tekke's courtyard gate and the adjacent "Muhammad Fountain" also disappeared. The inscription stone (kitāba) of the fountain was later found in two broken pieces, revealing that the fountain had been constructed in 1143 AH (1730–1731 CE).[7]

During the most recent restoration undertaken by the "Foundation for Knowledge, Culture, and Art," the missing sections of the tekke were reconstructed in accordance with their original form. The tekke complex comprises a mosque, a tawḥīdxāna (hall for devotional recitation), a mausoleum (turbat), a sharbatkhāna, dervish cells, a kitchen, an ablution area, a cemetery (ḥazīra), a shadirvan (ablution fountain), the main gate, and the Muhammad Fountain. The site of the demolished ḥaram building was, at different times, used as a kindergarten, a local market, and a mini football field.

Originally entrusted to the Turkish "Haq Yol Education, Assistance, and Friendship Foundation," the tekke underwent major restoration in 1988, during which several tombstones in the cemetery were excavated from beneath the soil. In 2005, the Turkish "Society for the Protection of History, Culture, and the Environment" oversaw the preparation of the relief, restoration, and reconstruction projects of the tekke, which were subsequently approved by the "Monuments Council." As of November 2010, the Shaykh Murad Bukhari Tekke has been administered by the "Foundation for Knowledge, Culture, and Art." [8]

**Library.** Archival documents dated 7 Muḥarram 1215 AH reveal that a special librarian (ḥāfiẓ al-kutub) was appointed to oversee the endowment books of the Shaykh Murad Tekke. After the closure of the tekkes, a portion of the tekke's abandoned library—consisting of 348 volumes—was, over the years, transferred to the

Süleymaniye Manuscript Library.[9] However, because many of these volumes contained multiple treatises, it was later determined that the actual total number of manuscripts amounted to 590.

Most of the works in the library are manuscripts written in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. Their subjects vary widely, and they date from the period between 652–1278 AH (1254–1862 CE), either in manuscript form or printed form.

### **The Endowments (Awaqf) and Waqf Deeds of the Shaykh Murad Bukhari Tekke**

Archival documents preserved in the Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü (Directorate General of Foundations) provide significant information on the endowments associated with the Shaykh Murad Bukhari Tekke.

According to an additional document dated September–October 1741, recorded in Register No. 747, page 131, line 121, pertaining to Mustafa's son, Shaykh al-Islam Dâmâdzâde Abulkhayr Ahmad:

- This waqfiyya mentions waqf properties related to the tekke located in Istanbul (Eyüb, Sütluçe, Hasköy, and Kadırga Harbor), Eğriboz, and Damascus (Shām). According to the waqf deed dated 1752–1753, registered in the Vakıflar Genel Müdürlüğü archives under Register No. 739, page 1, line 1, pertaining to the waqf of Mustafa Pasha ibn Abdurrahman Pasha in Istanbul:

- This waqfiyya states that Mustafa Pasha endowed part of his properties in Rumelia for certain services to be carried out at the Shaykh Murad Bukhari Tekke. According to an additional document dated 14 April 1753, recorded in Register No. 739, page 4, line 2, concerning the same waqf of Mustafa Pasha ibn Abdurrahman Pasha:

- This addendum specifies the following conditions for the administration of the Mustafa Pasha waqf:

- At the Shaykh Murad Tekke in Eyüb, the Khatm-i Khwājagān ceremony shall be performed every Monday and Friday after sunrise, and sweets and meals shall be distributed to guests following the ishrāq prayer.

- Incense shall be burned during the Khatm-i Khwājagān.

- The shaykh of the tekke shall supervise the Khatm-i Khwājagān ceremonies and teach lessons in Sahih al-Bukhari.

- An imam and a muezzin shall be appointed for the tekke mosque.

- A cook, a cleaning attendant, and a caretaker of the mausoleum (turbadār) shall be employed.

- Four Nakshbandi faqirs residing in the tekke cells shall

receive daily stipends.

- In the place known as Kürşunlu Mahzen, a mosque had been built, and Qur'anic exegesis (tafsīr), ḥadīth, and fiqh lessons shall be held five days a week, for which a special mudarris shall be appointed.

- A trustworthy representative (agent), a sweeper (farrosh), and a doorkeeper (darbān) shall be appointed for this mosque.

- A financial officer shall be appointed to oversee the management of the waqf revenues.

- Archival records also note that after the Khatm-i Khwājagān held at ishrāq time on Fridays and Mondays, grapes and meals were distributed to guests at the tekke.

### Services and Positions within the Tekke

Various officials served in the tekke, including: the imam; the nā'ib (assistant or deputy); the muezzin; the turbadār (caretaker of the mausoleum); the buhūrī (one responsible for burning incense, fragrant woods, and similar substances during religious ceremonies); the khādim-i shabaka (attendant overseeing ablution areas and cleanliness); the ḥāfiẓ al-kutub (librarian); the dersiyām (teacher); the jābī (financial overseer or collector); the miftāhdār (keeper of the keys); and the kātib (scribe or clerk).[10]

### Financing of Tekke Services

The services of the tekke were financed through the following endowments and state allocations:

- the Abulkhayr Ahmad waqf,
- the waqf of Maqtul Mustafa Pasha,
- the waqf of İzzī Süleyman, Court Usher of the Imperial Council (Dīvān-ı Hümāyūn Taşrifâtçısı),
- the waqf of Sayyid Akif Bey, also a court usher (taşrifâtçı),
- and contributions covered by the Istanbul Customs Office (Gümrük).

These waqf documents demonstrate that the Shaykh Murad Bukhari Tekke functioned not only as a religious center but also as an institution encompassing education and social services. The waqf system served as the primary financial foundation ensuring the long-term operation of the tekkes.[10]

### Hazīra (Cemetery)

The gravestones in the cemetery span the period from 1651–1652 to 1904–1905. The oldest gravestone belongs to Ser-Zağar 'Abd al-Karim Agha, one of the elders of the Janissaries. The most recent gravestone belongs to Shaykh Nuri. The date inscribed on 'Abd al-Karim Agha's gravestone is significant for illuminating the period during which the tekke was first constructed

as a madrasa. Moreover, the inscriptions on the gravestones reflect the characteristics of Old Anatolian and Classical Ottoman Turkish.

### CONCLUSION

Despite being physically disabled from the age of three, Shaykh Muhammad Murad al-Bukhari never ceased his scholarly and spiritual activities. His life's journey took him from his homeland of Samarkand to various regions across Anatolia. Throughout these travels, he visited and lived in many major centers of scholarship and spirituality, including Samarkand, India, Jerusalem, the Hijaz, Baghdad, Isfahan, Balkh, Bukhara, Cairo, Damascus, Istanbul, and Bursa. Among these, India, the Hijaz, Damascus, and Istanbul played particularly significant roles in shaping his life.

After affiliating himself with Muhammad Ma'sūm in India, he advanced not only in the outward sciences but also in the inward, spiritual disciplines, ultimately becoming the khalīfa of his master. With his teacher's permission, Sayyid Muhammad al-Bukhari departed India and stayed for a time in the Hijaz, where he continued his studies before settling in Damascus, where he married.

In Damascus, he established three institutions: the Berrāniyya Tekke and Madrasa, and the Nakshbandiya and Muradiyya Madrasas. He conducted both tekke and madrasa activities simultaneously. The "Muradiyya Family," his descendants, continued serving in these institutions and held the position of Mufti of Damascus for many years.

Responding to the insistent invitations of the scholarly elite, Muhammad Murad al-Bukhari traveled from Damascus to Istanbul, where, as a representative of the Nakshbandiya-Mujaddidiyya order, he continued his scholarly and spiritual mission in the tekke allocated to him. Revered by scholars, Sufis, statesmen, and the general public, he nevertheless faced difficulties at times that forced him to remain away from Istanbul. In the final years of his life, he returned to the city, where he eventually passed away. He was buried in the teaching chamber (dershane) of his tekke.

The last person to be buried in the cemetery was the tekke's final shaykh, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Balkhī. The gravestones exhibit inscriptions written in suls and ta'liq scripts. The cemetery contains gravestones belonging to men, women, and children. Through the inscriptions, one may derive valuable information about figures of Sufism and scholarship, as well as statesmen and artists. The documentation and cataloging of these gravestones is of great importance for their preservation.

The scholarly and spiritual mission begun by Shaykh

Muhammad Murad al-Bukhari continues to this day through his followers. The Shaykh Muhammad Murad Bukhari Tekke is open every day except Monday, from 08:30 to 17:00, and remains closed on official public holidays.

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