The present book is a doctorate thesis, written on the various aspects of the life and works of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhind. The concept of Tajdid, the Shaykh's views on Prophecy and Sainthood, Islamic Tradition, Ta'awwuf etc. have been discussed. The learned author has taken pains to judge things independently and has tried to correct the views of several contemporary writers of repute. He has refuted some baseless charges levelled against the Shaykh and has given a picture of his environment, as depicted in his letters. Unfortunately the author could not get a scholarly edition of the Maktubat (P. In), nor had an access to the Shaykh's other books, like Tahliliya, Mukashfati-'Ayniya (not Ghaybiya, p. 6), Sharh-i-Rub'iyyat, etc, which have already been published from Karachi. He has not eventually ascertained the dates of the Shaykh's works, nor could write an authentic life-sketch. In the Introduction (P. XIII) he writes:-

"Because of his scholarship he was later invited to the Court of Akbar at Agra. He stayed there for an unspecified period of time, during which he assisted the famous wazir and writer Abu-al-Fazl in his literary work."

We have no historical proof that the Shaykh was invited to the Court. He, however, went there on his own accord, as is stated in the Zubdat-al-Maqamat (P. 132, Lucknow 1890) and that he did not assist Abu-al-Fazl in his literary work, but assisted his brother Fayzi in his commentary of the Holy Qur'an, written with undotted letters.

He says (Introduction, P. XIII). In 1619 (1028 A.H.), therefore, the emperor Jahangir summoned Sirhind to his court and decided to imprison him in the fort of Gwalior”. This fact has not been stated with care. The Shaykh writes (in 1027 A.H.) in his letter 92, vol. II, “The infidels demolish mosques... No prostration to the emperor should be done... I shall come to Agra when the emperor returns from his tour” (see also the Tuzk-i-Jahangiri, p. 272, Aligarh 1864). The author has also discussed the position of the Shaykh (P. XIV) and does not consider his 70 letters (out of 534), addressed to officialdom, sufficient to guide the Moghul politics (pp. 2, 79). But we should bear in mind that it was an age of a despotic monarch, whose policies could be moulded through his officials only. Even when Jahangir could hear the Shaykh (Vol. III, Letter 43), the religious knowledge was inculcated mildly and slowly. There are again a number of letters, written to the royal family and the officials, by the Shaykh's sons and grandsons (published in the collections Maktubat-i-Ma'sumia, Gulshan-i-Wahdat, Waṣīlat al-Qabūl, Maktubat-i-Sayfia, etc). We should not expect these religious men to have dictated the political policies. They could only write and guide them spiritually, and the result was that the policies of Akbar were gradually changed.

The author has discussed, in details, (pp. 60-66) the views of Hallaj and Ibn-al-‘Arabi as taken by the Shaykh and has said that those Sufis were not treated as infidels. The belief that the Shaykh took them to be so, has no authenticity. We may recall to
our mind the efforts of the writer of the Kāsir al-Mukhālifin and also of Barzanji’s family, who either fabricated or distorted certain wordings of the Shaykh, saying that he had called those Sufis infidels. These attempts were made about 60 years after the death of the Shaykh. Mr. Iqbal Mujaddidi has proved in his book on Abdullah Khweshgi (Lahore 1971) that neither of the said writers had seen the Shaykh’s writings in the correct form. The forged fārmān of Aurangzeb, regarding the proscription of the Maktūbāt, and the Fatwā of the ʿArab ‘Ulama calling the Shaykh a Kāfir, are all misleading and have no authenticity, (See Mr. Iqbal’s said book, pp. 148-150, 161-164, 180-204). Similarly, the manuscript letter by ‘Abdu’l Jalil Siddiqi (as quoted by our author on pages 116-117) has no contextual relation with the letter No. 112, Vol. I, of the Maktūbāt. Dārā Shikoh’s Safinātul Auliya (discourse on the Shaykh) would throw light on ‘Abdu’l Haq’s misunderstandings in this connection. Dr. Friedmann, no doubt, deserves congratulations for writing a good thesis on the Shaykh, but he could really write much better if he could have an access to the works supposed by him as not extant.

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