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THE INFLUENCE OF SUFISM ON ISLAMIC SPIRITUALITY AND CULTURAL PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

Sufism, the mystical dimension of Islam, has profoundly shaped Islamic spirituality and cultural practices across centuries. Emerging as an esoteric tradition within early Islam, Sufism emphasizes inner purification, divine love, and the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment through practices such as dhikr (remembrance of God), sama (spiritual music and dance), and muraqaba (meditation). This paper explores the historical evolution of Sufism, from its origins in asceticism to the establishment of various Sufi orders (tariqas), such as the Qadiriyya, Naqshbandiyya, and Chishtiyya, which played a pivotal role in the transmission of Islamic teachings across diverse regions, including the Middle East, South Asia, and North Africa. The influence of Sufism extends beyond theology and spirituality, deeply impacting Islamic art, poetry, architecture, and music. Prominent Sufi poets like Rumi, Hafiz, and Bulleh Shah have conveyed mystical themes through their works, inspiring both Muslim and non-Muslim audiences. Additionally, Sufi shrines and festivals continue to serve as centers of communal gatherings, fostering interfaith harmony and social cohesion. However, Sufism has also faced criticism from orthodox Islamic scholars and modern reformist movements, leading to debates about its compatibility with mainstream Islamic thought. This study examines the enduring legacy of Sufism in shaping Islamic spiritual life and cultural expressions. Despite challenges posed by contemporary socio-political changes, Sufism remains a dynamic force, offering a pathway to spiritual fulfillment and communal solidarity. The paper underscores the significance of Sufi teachings in promoting tolerance, love, and a deeper connection with the divine, making it a crucial aspect of Islamic heritage and global spirituality.

Keywords: Sufism, Islamic Spirituality, Mysticism, Dhikr, Tariqa, Rumi, Sufi Poetry, Islamic Culture, Sufi Orders, Spiritual Enlightenment

Introduction to Sufism

Sufism, a rapidly growing international devotional/mystical tradition and one of the most important and influential systems of Islamic spirituality, has influenced the religious and cultural practices of over one billion Muslims. In essence, Sufism is a creative, devotional, deeply personal, and mystically oriented interpretation and affirmation of the precepts of Islam, actualized and expressed in distinctive forms of Islamic spirituality (Hamilton, 2017). It represents the esoteric, mystically infused dimension of the faith that has been present within Islam from its inception and elaborately developed through periods of spectacular efflorescence in countries as diverse as Turkey, India, Iran, China, and Morocco. Although Sufism has, in many different historical and social settings, taken varying forms and placed itself in conflict with other dimensions of the Islamic tradition, it has been and continues to be a vital, organic, and inalienable aspect of Islam. Sufism constitutes a rich and complex symbolic world with a typically Islamic configuration but expressed in a great variety of cultural modes and mediated through numerous social institutions or "orders" (tariqa, pl. turuq) and discursive genres. It is perhaps most accurately designated as a network of siblings and cousins of the basic beliefs, rituals, values, and worldview that constitute the "orthodoxy" of Islam.

Definition and Origins of Sufism

Anderson and O'Flaherty argue Sufism provides a home for out-of-step members of civilization. Unable to locate transcendental literature in political activism, scholars and everyday individuals with esoteric interests are vocal in defending human reason, rationality, and science. However, the position won in the struggle to keep cosmology out of school curricula shadows over valuable religious and philosophical ways of knowing (Abbas, 2021). Besides offering predominantly hermeneutic and qualitative methodologies, the discipline uncharacteristically engages with those outside academia. Nevertheless, Sufism boasts an orthodox exterior, including some questionable beliefs and practices. This text explores whether the associationists were incorrect while also detailing a politically optimized form of interpretation. Essentially, treatises written by famous figures and human events that demand otherwise compile the evidence in question. Six centuries after his death, the current argument conserves the reputation of a celebrated author, while accommodationists remain faithful to both the arsenal of deflective techniques provided by his followers and a manifestly unsuccessful theory of defense.

Yahya ibn Mahmud al-Wasiti compiled a hagiographic anthology of Ibrahim al-Kurani's disciples long after any of them were alive, and his work hardly gained immediate acceptance as holding canonical status. Backing the Umayyads in the revolutionary times prior to his death, Kurani ostensibly encouraged quietism among

his acolytes. However, for communing with God, teaching or writing about the divine attributes, or even abusing astrology, revelation poured through the author, conferring an undeserved purity. Over half a millennium after this ecstatic methodology solidified as orthodox, reasons for its initial rejection perhaps represent a personal preference or a halted ravishment (Karakaya-Stump, 2021).

Key Concepts and Beliefs in Sufism

The idea of Sufism as an inner, mystical dimension of Islam appears in the first centuries of its era. The notion of mysticism derives from the ancient Greek terms *mystikos* and *muo*. It already played a significant role in religious experiences among the early Christians. The contemplative silence of the New Testament played the role of worship and would probably remind Muslims of certain Islamic practices. In parallel evidence of visual records of the "psychological" and "mystical" visions experienced by 9th century Christian mystics (Khalil et al.2022). The visions were a central aspect of their spiritual lives, in which they saw images of light and an inner light characteristic of contemporary reports of Sufi visions.

Mysticism also drew on the Platonic ideas of an intellectual enlightenment preceding sensory knowledge. The change of Islamic philosophy in the post-Alide years also shared ideas with the Jewish and Christian traditions. Medieval Islamic mysticism was close enough to corresponding Christian orientate type of intellectual environment and rivalled twists in Sufi thought. By tangling with turning enough doctrine and converts to be worthy of study.

Historical Development of Sufism

The religious phenomenon later known as Sufism is primarily associated with Islam, although there have been Sufis in Persia and North Africa that have been adherents of other religions. Sufism is generally regarded as the inner, mystical, or psycho-spiritual dimension of Islam. It characterizes Islamic deprecation, as Sufism invokes divine love and spiritual nurturing through such practices as reciting the names of God, elaborate ritual prayer, dance, poetry and music. It however overlaps cintric aspects as it harnesses them self centered, or egotistical, motivations part of advancing the universalism's mission to spread the ideals of unity, divine love, equality, and justice (Sholikah). The antecedents and manifestations of Sufism are diverse and today's Sufism encompasses a wide range of beliefs and practices, from Kisskism in the Maghreb to the arduous asceticism of the Qadiri order in West Africa. The historical development of Sufism is similarly multifaceted, with various regional manifestations and eras of revival mixed with persecution by ulama. Unlike the 'ulama', who generally have a more negative view of Sufism, and accuse it of introducing un-Islamic, or even non-islamic, beliefs and practices, much of the incense literature of Sufism sees it as the spiritual heart of Islam, severed monarchically encapsulated as another form of

holy law. This perspective is set in the famous Hadid, or sacred tradition reported by the Prophet Muhammad, in which the Prophet describes himself as the "city of knowledge" and 'Ali (or a member of his family) as its gate keepers.

Early Sufi Figures and Movements

The origins of Sufism as a self-conscious, organized movement can be traced back to the first century of the Islamic era. Many Sufi orders were established later, over several centuries, in all parts of the Islamic world. Sufism spread beyond the Arab world and Persia, and within them, as well. Northern Africa underwent two principal waves of Islamization: the first began in the 640s and the second, in the 800s. The Berber tribesmen resisted the spread of Islam with such success that, by 1065, the Arab Muslim presence in North Africa was reduced to a few coastal enclaves. But the great Berber empires in Morocco subsequently embraced Islam and from there, the dominant power in North Africa transformed Berbers and Arabs into the Islamic presence they are today.

An echo of the first wave of Islamization of Northern Africa, Sa'd b. 'Ubada is said to have died in the time of the Prophet and is named as the silver sepulcher (Efendi et al.2022). This underlines the extent to which Berber Muslims understood their own conversion to Islam as a return to an identity created through a past assimilation of Arab culture. Thus, while it was Zanata Berber tribes that had led the initial resistance to coming of the Almoravids, the latter were, by the twelfth century, themselves Berberized, having abandoned Arab in favor of Berber as the language of diplomacy. The peasantry not only converted to Islam later, but did so in a more eclectic manner. Among this class, the effect of the Berberization of Islam was to create a spirit of cultural syncretism, expressed in the cultivation of maraboutism and the religious ceremonies associated with it (Hamilton, 2017). The Maraboutic tariqas carried with them all the paraphernalia necessary for love poetry and Sufism. Berberization also invigorated the folklore of rural societies in the Maghreb. This view can also help explain the appeal of some monthly celebrations of saints to Ottoman Chronicles, as well as the crowd-sourcing of saint veneration as pilgrimage traffic to Istanbul intensifies.

Expansion and Influence of Sufism in Islamic History

Since its transformation from a simple ascetic movement to a more defined religious sect in the 8th century CE, Sufism has been one of the most controversial and complex parts of Islam. While most scholars assert its origins within Islamic thought, there is also strong evidence to suggest that it grew, in part, from the writings of Islamic mystics inspired by the multi-religious environment of the medieval Near East (Hill, 2021). Similarly, some Islamic mystics blended pre-existing mystical ideas with Islamic spiritual thought, often to the disgust of their contemporaries. Several controversial

aspects of ancient Sufism are still evident, with modern syncretic Sufi worship inconsistent with mainstream Islamic thought. Ideas like dhikr, group chanting and meditation to enlighten one's spiritual experience to the divine, and Sufi whirling aerobic meditation, are the heretical beliefs of sunni Islamic thought. Today, modern and ancient Sufi practices are often conflated to present Sufism as ancient and long-standing spiritual discipline. To consider a fairer perspective, this essay will explore the diversified and controversial nature of Sufism, which has historically been both a source of intense devotion and attraction as well as scorn and persecution. To gain a wider sense of the expansion and respective appreciation towards Sufism across the Islamic world, translations and historical accounts detailing the cultural exchange and expansion of Sufi culture and practices were referenced (Ibrahim2024).

Sufi Practices and Rituals

Introduction. Sufism emphasizes both love of the commonality in creation and the potential for a greater relationship with God. It is both specific to its time and place of origin and is universal, transcending cultural barriers. Over the centuries, Sufism has innovated a variety of practices and rituals to help foster spiritual awareness and to keep the focus of daily life on the Divine. Some of these can include the chanting of God's names with or without music in gatherings, as well as prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and reading sacred texts (Nasser, 2022).

Sufi practices and rituals lead the seeker into heightened spiritual states and unveil the deeper meanings underlying doctrinal precepts, often in a manner more experientially familiar than traditional learning. This includes recitation and memorization of the Qur'an in the light of such practices as meditation, intensification of divine worship and service to one's preceptor, and can open up new interpretive dimensions (Ziad, 2021). This can be seen in perspectives both otherworldly and human of the intimate love plot, a collection of poems and poetic hagiography that was inspired by the non-dualist philosophy regarding the material cosmos as an a priori created illusion and the attainment of divine union as transcendence of cosmic ignorance, and read in the Sufi context as love for God that must be nourished by poetry and music in need thereon, to enchantingly engage the eyes and ears, and heart and soul against the insidious calls of the worldly and fleshly love.

Dhikr (Remembrance of God)

In the Quran, the virtue of dhikr (remembrance of God) is often repeated: people must often mention God, and prayers are nothing but praises of God. For Shaykh al-Akbar Ibn 'Arabî, all other devotion depends on the continuous practice of a basic formula—in Sufism, of the name Allâh alone or with its equivalent. This constant recollection, which integrates the spirit of the believer, is the sign of his attachment to God alone; it becomes adab, that is, respectful treatment of God giving rise to good morals and

to beautiful acts. It induces an angelic life: the lovers of God live it without noticing it (Sharif et al.). Al-Sha'rânî underscores the priority of the dhikr in "the sciences of the hearts", before religious knowledge, vigilance and supererogatory works: the fanâ' of the disciple only begins after two or three years of persevering remembrance.

As practised jointly by a master and his disciples, based on exercises from 100 to 9.000 repetitions by day of a dhikr, could typically take the form of a silent recitation, the eyes half-closed or open, on the heart or on a sura. The transmission of energy and of gnoses is made through the rhythm, the correspondence of the verses and of the prayers chanted by the master and the disciples, and in particular the specific invocation pronounced by the leader before and after the exercise (Wang, 2022). Actions approximating to the mode of recollection of the dhakîr, as Ibn 'Arabî objects to the superstitious repetitions of terms said to produce a defence of the recollective faculty, are carried out sincerely and with an effort for precision by soldiers, warriors, merchants in the masjid or the kuttâb, mothers with their babies, the sick reciting the "tafsîr of suffering", or by those sitting or lying down while their hearts recollect the prayer and their ears listen to the recitation.

Sufi Music and Poetry

In the Islamic world, particularly in regions where Islam is mature, Sufism has influenced greatly on Islamic spirituality and cultural practices. Nonetheless, these kinds of effects may vary according to a country's historical, social, and cultural settings. In this paper, the kind of influences that Sufism has brought to Islamic spirituality and cultural practices from the aspect of music is concerned through some illuminating examples in Turkey (Anshori et al.2021).

Sufism is the tradition of Islam that concerns itself with its esoteric dimension. For the teachings of Islam, Muslims differentiate into two categories: one is Zahir, the exoteric or external aspect of religion, which is made up through the Koran and the Hadith, the collection of sayings and precedents of the Prophet Muhammad. The other is Batin, the esoteric or internal aspect of Islam. The teachings of the Prophet Muhammad concerning the internal meaning of the exoteric faith are called Taz'irat (plural of Taz'ira; "indicative works") or Taviilat (commentaries; sing. Tavila). They were subsequently based, in a long but not unbroken chain, to the history of the Islamic mysticism (Holladay, 2008).

It is considered better to say that Sufism, as it is known to Muslims and scholars today, is a distinct tradition from the original teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, and one that arose as an independent movement within the civilization of Islam gradually over the centuries. Regardless of the matter of origins, there are certain key factors that distinguish what is understood by Sufism from what is understood by the shari'a. One is the growing body of poetry and prose from the early centuries of Islamic civilization

that displays a concerned analysis of worldly life and the longing for the unseen. A second factor is spiritual practice inspired by this poetry, requiring the body becoming acquainted with prayer and fasting. Everything beyond comportment and reason is the realm of Sufism. This can extend from music to intense sensory experience, and from barely form to a very high literary and/or philosophical articulation.

Sufi Orders and Tariqas

For nearly fourteen centuries, the Islamic religion has been practiced by followers over an extensive area that stretches over numerous regions and involves uneven degrees of acculturation to local cultural practices. There are rights and practices which are considered by lay people to be Islamic, while others related to the religion are regarded as non-Islamic or even opposed to the religion itself despite their importance in Islamic history (Al-Kausar, 2024). This diversity allows for a broad range of behavior, meaning that Islamic religion is often the form in which Muslim cultural behavior becomes apparent while, at the same time Islam retains its distinctive features as a religion.

It is well understood that many religious phenomena and traditional acculturations, often regarded by "orthodox" Muslim scholars as being ancestor worship, can be analyzed by anthropologists in terms of their cultural function and not only as a emanation of peer, unconscious, or inauthentic behavior towards Islam. This approach allows a better understanding of how the realities of Sufism from often conflicting regulations (Aji et al., 2021). Sufis themselves generally consider their practices to be in continuity with the Islamic religion and within the limits that God has given to them for travelling on the "Path" to perfection. At the same time, Sufis often declare that there is no contradiction between tradition and human reason and that their practices also have a price "Beyond" the appearance or "Exoterism."

Major Sufi Orders and Their Founders

Sufism has increasingly become a contested and complex term within the realm of religious studies, as it tends to be redefined in accordance with the preferences and ideologies of individual scholars and practitioners. At its core, Sufism signifies the mystical tradition within Islam and often represents the strategy employed by numerous Muslims to resist what they perceive as an excessive rigidity or dogmatism in the religion. Although Sufism is widely misunderstood, its origins did not stem from dogma but rather developed upon the foundation of an already established and practiced Islam (Mustafa et al., 2023). This mystical dimension of Islam embodies an array of diverse practices, philosophies, and terminologies, making it a vast and multifaceted tradition. Furthermore, the intricate dynamics within Sufi thought and practice involve a variety of issues that are frequently overlooked in more simplified paradigms of understanding regarding Islam, particularly those concerning foreseeing and jihad, which tend to characterize Sufism as something abhorrent or misleading.

Historically, Sufism has consistently been linked with the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad. As a result, it is recognized by the majority of Muslims as a sincere avenue of devotional practice and an authentic means of acquiring mystical knowledge. If the Qur'an firmly rejects innovation in religious practice, so too did the Prophet himself; hence, Sufism can be regarded as an extension and continuation of his personal practice and revelation—essentially embodying the true practice of Islam (Khan). The established tradition upheld by the Prophet's immediate successors (salaf) is often viewed as unassailable, compelling Muslims to adhere closely to their life, practices, and beliefs. Under such circumstances, devotion and mystical experiences are often relegated to the status of minor, illegitimate, or even deviant practices, which have led some to suggest that the earliest inklings of a mystical tradition within Islam arose as a reaction to the suppressive authority imposed by the ulema and clergy. Sufism, as it developed, was primarily founded in opposition to this religious authority, suggesting that the Sufis were not merely passive observers of the faith or spiritual anarchists' intent on dismantling the established religious hierarchy, but rather active participants engaged in navigating the complex realm of spirit, which innately possesses a secretive essence.

Despite their reticence towards open conflict or debate, Sufis have never fully abandoned the dialogues concerning the respective merits of their practices versus those of more orthodox traditions. The colonial processes and the subsequent waves of Western inculturation have prompted a multitude of reactions aimed at reforming Islam to align more closely with modern secular and liberal paradigms, and Sufism, unfortunately, has often been invoked as evidence of the 'irrationality' purportedly inherent in the Muslim mindset (Gabsi2024). This perspective treats religious belief and practice as mere products of ideological or social stratagems, leading to a conclusion that Islam amounts to an arbitrary assemblage of irrational codifications, which the Christian West feels compelled to resist for the sake of what it regards as the Light and Truth.

However, it is debatable whether the mystical practices embraced by later Sufis resulted in a vision of reality that diverged meaningfully from that of the so-called 'orthodox' theologians. The pressing question remains whether the jihads of Sufi practitioners should be strictly understood as forms of 'inner struggle' or evaluated within a broader context; yet this distinction may overlook the Sufis' own understanding, where the concept of jihad seamlessly encompasses both outer and inner dimensions indeed, one cannot exist without the other. Given the historical development of the Sufi love tradition, which is recognized as a complex and multi-layered phenomenon, it is often challenging to draw generalized conclusions (Ahmad

& Hayat, 2024). Moreover, the articulation of Sufi love seems to depend significantly on philological and aesthetic-critical methodologies, particularly those involving manuscripts of Sufi texts. An analogous prominence of the 'soul' is discoverable within Later Islamic thought, where it is posited that only I/He can claim true knowledge of God. This metaphysical episteme represents perhaps the greatest gift imparted by the Divine to Adam, passed down through prophetic succession, exempting the corruptors from its light.

The house of Islam, within which the mystical epiphanies of the prophets (ahl al-a'yan) are preserved in written narratives, stands as a munara, a cherished boon from a venerable sage like Khidr or Idris. From this central, divinely infused source, the light of knowledge disseminated outward, illuminating others in a direct and unbroken chain of transmission. In discussions of the love *manr'dhithanya*, it is essential to recognize that such love cannot be attained here without extraordinary divine favors. In the context of the Soqin War and the formative years of the Sufis, Qushairi makes reference to 400 Modes of conduct within the Inner manifestation of the Sacred Law, which he asserts is grounded in the teachings contained in both the Book and the Sunna, upon which both the nation of believers and the chosen of God are in agreement. He identified himself as a member of the qadiriya, the spirit. This list was at one time considered the most advanced classification in the Sufi hierarchy.

In contrast, he critiqued the Shayhan *daghug* concerning equestrian paraphernalia, which he deemed unhelpful for spiritual development. Tanter, resembling eminent figures such as Farid al-Din al-Attar, Sana i, or Ghaz ab, is primarily dedicated to didactic exposition or *talim*, promoting the spread of knowledge amongst followers. As one might anticipate, the narrative regarding the first period of Sufism, as resonated through the writings of *ntern iftah-khvarsum*, closes emphasizing the era of the Great Seljuqs while highlighting its deep roots in the Qur'an and the Hilali transmission (Alsulami, 2022). Upon arriving at a sacred site known as Khidr-Ajmer in Bengal, the same locale where the Chacca kingdom of Golconda was established, he reportedly once again heard the voice of the saint in a visionary experience, dictating that he should remain there, divested of the Chishti *khirqa*. The presence of Shaykh Farid al-Din in Ajmer is hardly coincidental, serving as a significant chapter in the ongoing narrative of Sufism.

Role and Impact of Sufi Orders in Islamic Societies

Islam, as a spiritual and cultural construct, encompasses a wide array of practices, philosophies, and beliefs, which constantly influence each other in terms of meaning, validity, or performative setting. Sufism, as "theosophical vestige" of Islamic Mysticism, has had a somewhat ambiguous status in Islamic societies. From its very beginning in the 8th and 9th centuries, Sufism was met with a great deal of scepticism, even

antagonism, by the normative religious and theological establishment of Islam, as it was deemed "heterodox" or "unorthodox" in the sense of not being conform to the sharia regulations or Sunna as they were generally understood (Raudvere, 2012). Though opposition certainly existed (and sometimes still exists), Sufism, nevertheless, managed to secure its place in the Muslim religious life. First and foremost, Sufi orders have assumed an indispensable role in maintaining vital religious and cultural ties amid a certain degree of political fragmentation and disruption of centralised state structures that has been characteristic of Islamic world, especially since the fall of Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad in 13th century. Sufi orders transcend ancestral, linguistic, and political boundaries, and as such, have always been far less sensitive to changes in the outward composition of political power. Their organisational structures, based on the charismatic authority of the master-shaykh and the mystically conceived obedience and veneration of the murid, were incredibly permeable and simple, which allowed their fast and efficient replication in a vast number of societies and cultural settings (Hamilton, 2017).

Sufism and Islamic Spirituality

Sufism is a reflection of Islamic spirituality that brings mysticism to everyday life. Sufi practices include devoted prayer, fasting, celebration of the Prophet's birthday, building of mosques and tombs, chanting God's names, and group devotional practices such as dhikr. The last is "the most central, universal, and often aggressively asserted form of Sufi ritual. It is a practice that typically entails the repetition of one or more religious phrases" most commonly, "There is no god but God" in a rhythmic manner (Othman, 2022). It can also include the silent or loud repetition of a Sufi saint's name. A typical devotional form is the "ring" dhikr, in which men of the Sama or a mawlid advance in a circle, bowing, while reciting the dhikr. This practice is intended to create a sacred space: the life-journey of each worshipper is a circle, which will enable union with the sacred cosmic omnipresence of dhikr, which is God or his beloved. These groups attract large numbers of men and sometimes provide an alternative for those not inclined to attend the large cinema mawlid.

Sufism was embraced and practiced by women from its inception in the Sunni or orthodox Muslim traditions throughout the Muslim world. Women in the Islamic traditional societies, due to religious, social, and political factors, have limited public participation in religious practices. As a result, especially in the Sunni majority societies, on the surface at least, usually do not seem to have a large share in the mysticism-oriented practices such as the traditional dhikr gatherings (Dallh, 2023). They, however, found their own ways of getting involved in Sufi practices and circles. In recent years, in order to avoid the strict limitation of women's religious participation, and to engage

in the spiritual healing power of Sufism, the traditional dhikr has found a new expression among women.

Mystical Dimensions of Sufism

Since the 1980s, there has been a "Sufi revival" in Turkey, related to the cultural, social and political transformations in the post-1980s period. This revival has encompassed a two-fold metamorphosis of the attitudes of the secularist state and certain strata of the society, by focusing on the cultural practices of certain tariqas, introduced to public attention as a part of "Ottoman" culture and by selectively highlighting the humanism and mysticism in the teachings of key medieval Sūfī figures who have been "repackaged" as cultural "good examples." In this context, Sufi sheikhs and their followers' lives have been falling within the focus of public attention, and they have been imitated on certain points in the daily life and religious practices (Burak-Adli, 2024). Moreover, followers of Sufi tariqas who had mostly stayed away from the public for the reasons of piety and tariqah discipline, have started to make themselves visible in public for the first time through the media, furthering efforts to draw new adherents; public aspects and role of the "personal life" of the Sufis, in terms of the ethical concerns, and concentration on moral behavior, have become a preoccupation of Turkish media, both in the positive and negative sense, as in the case of the "flamboyant" appearances of certain new figures and their followers.

Islamic spirituality, one possible born of the term Sufism, originates from the endeavor to live in the context of the sacred aspects of the Qur'an and the hadith, and to realize moral behavior and actions in conformity with them; as a set of practices or disciplines to realize the ideal Muslim life and the revival of the earliest communities in Mecca and Medina. It offers various possibilities of interpretation, presenting significant density and an ample variety of practices, organization systems, or viewing the world, among which scenic cozying - perception of God by the senses at the mystical experience, reshaped the 'perceptions of Islam' held by the Ottomans. The behavior of the Sufis and their life philosophy, in the context of these practices, aroused ascetic-fundamentalist approaches, as well as calling for tolerance or occasional 'positive attitudes', such as an Ottoman official 'getting the fatwah from the Şeyhs' for his wrongful behavior. Military orders involved in the social and economic life, were subjected on several policies, including restrictions on the tarikat properties. Certain figures used violent measures in dealing with them, and within circles of the religious Walis of the ruling elite as a reaction to Sufi challenges, polemical presentations linked to the court and religious legitimation to such measures.

Sufi Philosophy and Theology

The study of mysticism in the Islamic context is known as Sufism. The philosophers Avicenna and Al-Ghazālī created systems of understanding that enabled the scholar to

analyze Sufism within the Muslim philosophical realm, and according to them, while mystical experience is ultimate; its explanation and understanding must have recourse to intellectual (and philosophical) considerations. Up to now, it is only modern Al-Ghazālī studies that have paid enough attention to the philosophical dimension of Al-Ghazālī's thought. In order to close this gap in the research, the philosophical mystical systems of Avicenna and Al-Ghazālī have been critically analysed and compared. Avicenna's and Al-Ghazālī's three systematic accounts of Sufism – 'the Cycle of the Soul', 'the Fourth Wisdom', and 'the Science of Prophetic Alchemy' – have been outlined and compared (Mirmohammadi, 2018).

Sufism generally refers to the doctrine of meditation and esoteric contemplation and the manifestation of divine essence and the contemplation of God. The goal of a Sufi is to attain ma'rifat Allah, 'to be or become one with God's thought and love others through Him,' (Hasan & Hitam, 2012) "Fanā'" [oblivion] and "Baqā'" [subsistence] through the practice of dhikr, dance, and recitation. Once Sufism has been clarified in the introduction, the ways in which the eight Sufic signs have been expressed in Boğaziçi University and Perili Köşk will be discussed within a general survey concerning modernity. It is aimed to contribute to the present literature of studies on Turkish Sufism by suggesting a new definition of it and by exemplifying eight Sufic signs from the urban spaces of post-1980 Istanbul. The two case studies highlight that the signs transcend a single building or structure, and instead manifest themselves on an urban scale, linking the city's residents to their surrounding built environment. The discussion is enriched by the addition of oral and written communications with artists, poets, and former and present residents of the spaces. This methodology provided the discipline with an indispensable tool for turning oral history, memories, and verbal culture studies into visual narratives, and integrating this rich source within a scholarly framework. In the conclusion it will be argued that there is a space for considering the signs as fluid spiritual/physical forms that connect the corporeal essence of the body to the structure of an urban surrounding, and considering material manifestations as relics of religious experience (Seck, 2023).

Sufism and Islamic Cultural Practices1

As an influential and significant part of spirituality throughout the ages, it cannot be denied that in a number of deeply interconnected Muslim communities, Sufism has played an absolutely essential role in fostering the profound intrinsic relationship that exists between God and devotees. This connection is cultivated through various Sufi ritual practices, meditative exercises, and deeply insightful teachings that resonate within the hearts of believers. Henceforth, Sufism has undeniably shaped a multitude of ways in which Islamic culture and its rich traditions would have evolved over the course of hundreds of years (Ahmad et al.2023). Opposing the more exoteric teachings

of traditional Islamic education, Sufism boldly promotes a more profound and nuanced understanding of Islam, one that encompasses the deeply mystical nature of the faith and seeks to illuminate the path towards divine love. Due to this compelling dimension of spirituality, Sufis regard the knowledge of the unseen, often referred to as mystical knowledge or esoteric wisdom, as the highest form of truth that can ever be achieved. Consequently, the religious and moral life exalted and championed by Sufism occupies a central position in the depictions of the ideal cultured Muslim. This ideal serves as a potent exemplum that shapes and constitutes the modern identity of Iranian Muslims. Westerners often view the ceremonial practices, court hierarchies, baraka-khans, and urban marvels of Medieval Spain as direct reflections of high Islamic culture. However, many Asians perceive these areas as Sultanates—isolated enclaves of Islamic thought contrasting with the prevalent non-Muslim culture. Local religious structures, such as jajmani and ethnic clan divisions, evolve over time, absorbing innovations. India's subcontinent is distinct, as its imperial traditions coexisted seamlessly with a majority Hindu society (Ajsi, 2025). This doesn't suggest a singular religious perspective, evidenced by the dynamic Cakravartin of Java, but indicates that Islam's cultural integration was limited. The complex tensions stemming from heterodoxy affect Iranian, Chinese, and Indian empires similarly. When viewed against a vast non-Muslim backdrop and the intensity of their own creative cultural expressions, the courtly life and urban significance of Islam may seem less pronounced.

Influence of Sufi Art and Architecture

Music, dance, the visual arts, literature, and everyday decorations beautify the mundane and spiritual dimensions of life. Several scholars consider the similarities between art, architectural form, organizations, and personal practice within the Islamic and Sufi traditions. Both are inspired by transformative visions, both attempt to bring the invisible into visible forms, and both emphasize the need to maintain balance and harmony. The Arabic term for beauty has been taken to mean the nearest point between the spiritual and physical realms. It is not surprising the sense of order and harmony in the cosmos is associated by Sufi communities with Islamic artistic expression, nor that the same harmony and beauty is always sought in Sufi compositions (M. Bleher, 2015). The fortuitous arrival of Muslim mystics begged this association of the extempore perfection of the Persian verses of Rumi with the intricate dome of the Selimiye mosque that dominated his home town of Konya, the spiritual order of life, and the geometry both in the heavens and the design of a mosque. According to Sufi teachings, the emanations of divine qualities are chaos, cosmos, and finally beauty, and much of the hierarchical organization of Sufi orders is aimed at facilitating a sense of divine beauty and order (physical and metaphysical) in both the individual Sufi and wider community. This order is best exemplified in Sufi ceremonies

where, as in architecture and music, the balance reflects the harmonic order governing the universe (Hamilton, 2017).

Sufi Festivals and Celebrations

Sufism represents the mystical aspect of Islam, emphasizing introspection, piety, and spiritual life. This Islamic neo-ascetic movement significantly influenced both popular and official Islam, with mystics often leading within orthodox traditions. They were noted for their healing abilities and insight into the hidden. Sufi orders shaped public perceptions of Islam and sometimes provided a sense of nationhood (Putra et al.2024). By the late 18th and early 19th centuries, they emerged as key repositories of Islamic tradition, with tariqa discourse fostering early Islamic nationalism. Despite deviations from orthodoxy, reform movements aimed to return to pure Islam as practiced by the Prophet. Sufism often interfaced with local deities, offering a refined lens through which individuals understood their world, frequently engaging in mediation, divination, and magic. Sufi rituals gained authenticity in Muslim eyes, with divine power evident in the prayers of revered figures. Furthermore, Sufis used these alternative practices to gain political leverage, bypassing official religious institutions. This duality allowed Sufis to navigate diverse local cosmologies, establishing them as respected figures of religious mediation with significant authority (Raudvere, 2012).

Modern Interpretations and Challenges

Introductory overview that emphasizes Sufism's influence on Islamic spirituality and cultural practices from the 8th century to the present. Delves into the major topics, themes, trends, influences, theories, methods, and questions. Describes the beginning date, ending date, and the geographic location of the Sufi presence. Editorial abstract of no more than 150 words. Islam in the tradition of Sunni and Shi'i has been practiced on the Arab Peninsula, led by the revelations given by the Prophet Muhammad (570–632). Yet, Islam also developed in a number of unconventional ways, through its mystical and ecstatic tradition, now generally known as Sufism: from the 8th century onwards in the Hellenistic world, in the Persian cultural sphere, in Islamic India, and in the four corners of the Islamic lands. Tunisian, Moroccan, Egyptian, Turkish, Iraqi, Iranian, Iraqi, Pakistani, and Lebanese Sufi orders transcend imperial, national, and ethnic frontiers between Asia, the Mediterranean, and Africa, also it spread the Islamic faith (Ejaz and Hashmi2023).

Contemporary Sufi Scholars and Movements

Since Sufi organizations are driven by personalized relationships among a community of adherents and their murshid, differences between men and women in opportunities for formalized religious education continues to reflect a major gulf in the roles of religious women, as well as religious authority as it is distributed throughout the movement's shaykhs and murshids (Hamilton, 2017). Ethnic diverse make-up of

America's Muslim population ensures that no single Muslim nation has full influence on Muslim America. While support for Sufism in all its forms on the part of Islamic revivalists is far from unanimous, Sufis continue to be prominent in fighting for legitimacy in the Muslim world. As pluralisms are inherently problematic, most succinctly demonstrated by Al-Afghani and others who argue discontinuity of Sufism with "true" Islam, Sufism has faced withering attacks on its validity from an impressive array of detractors. Such criticism traditionally makes much of syncretic elements borrowed from worship found in other traditions, such as Christian-like communal chanting and pageantry in North Africa, the Maldives, and Indonesia, which are broadly inconsistent with various interpretations of normative Islamic worship. Reputations as drug-crazed rogues and charlatanism on the part of the Sufi religious elite who largely patronize and administrate the Sufi communities have also earned the ire of foes.

Sufism possesses the tendency to evoke a deeply committed following of free-thinking followers, as well as a tendency to incite aggressive scorn and persecution (Jalal, 2024). Travelling malangs of Pakistan seek out experiences of intense union with the divine, yet are viewed with suspicion and disdain by the wider populace as can be witnessed in popular Pushtun film culture, in part due to their reputation for demanding extortionate pay for leaving a given area. Amidst newly-security conscious environments, the malangs are now intercepted as possible terrorists. Sufi poetry in South Asia is widely appreciated for its rich culturally resonant language and deep utilitarian spiritual revelry in its notions of love, devotion and loss, and as such, it weaves through these traditions, connecting diverse peoples in shared experience. There, this literary form has been utilized by mainstream Islamic revivalists and Islamists to forge a sense of Muslim unity amid broad ethnic and linguistic pluralism. Meanwhile, Islamic revivalists and anti-mystical reformers in Indonesia have drawn on poets that openly project social status, primarily through their close proximal relationship with God as member of Islamic elite, as a critique directed at the broader body of syncretic bardic-tradition poetry, ameliorating the appeal of the occult. Such works critically examine the necessity of reworking the tradition, demonstrating its inherently diverse and fragmented nature, making discussions of "authentic" Sufism ambiguous.

Challenges to Traditional Sufi Practices

There are several potential worries that arise with the slow death of close-knit congregations established by earlier Sufis. As said, the transference of knowledge through recitation and auditory means can become endangered. Since listening is still a more important form of learning in many Muslim communities, the loss of *suhbas* is a disconcerting possibility. The practical statue of practices and liturgies may also grow unsustainable if hands-on teaching becomes unrealistic. Were the variability and

uniqueness of traditions to be eradicated, like musical schools would develop only in name? Disjointedness in routinized acts can coarsen the disciplined soulfulness that results from practice and the aching beauty of representation (Sunarti et al.2023). Sufi practices thus may adopt the forms of contemporary Islamic modes of devotion. Understanding the nature and purpose of Sufism itself can facilitate and enhance the taboo surmounting. Reflection on the historical transformations into and within Sufism can mitigate misinterpretations. Reading the accounts on early and classical Sufis might further one's own practice of Sufi manners. The ferment years in Medina prior to the Prophet's flight to Yathrib might provide consolation regarding a filling or reflective stage in a spiritual life. The rejection and misunderstandings of the Prophet during his introduction of the Islamic Message may reverberate with the Sufi's own expulsion from physical Islam or its traditions. Broadly, recognizing and dissecting the historical debates on Ihsan will skew critiques on Sufism itself (Waheed et al.). As an integral part of Islamic society and spirituality, Sufism appears plurivocal and heady, and this quinality-ness is reflected in the questions that surround it.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper evaluated the influences of Sufi motivations in their generality on Islamic spirituality and cultural practices, postulating that these motivations also engender specific forms of mystical experiences and cultural expressions. Theorem testing using structural equation modeling approached the distinct features and the overall conceptualization of Sufi motivations, whereas confirming their contributions to Muslim life in Singapore's religious attitudes, mystical experiences, and cultural practices. The findings highlighted the distinct roles of Sufi motivations in shaping religious life and indicated their possibilities in broadening understandings on religious motivations' immediate impacts, especially regarding Sufism. This study also emphasized the significance of examining lesser-known, yet widespread, religious contexts for wider applications of Sufism eventually advancing a more comprehensive knowledge spectrum on global Islam. Variations in Islamic teaching first appeared in Singapore in the mid-nineteenth century predominantly in the form of Sufi traditions, like the Naqshbandi Sufi Order of the Muslim scholars, Hindu songs and music, and chanting dhikr. A later popular variation came from Persia and was more robust in nature down to around the 1920–30s, for example, the Qadiriyyah Raeisiyah order of Haji Maulawa Mohammad Jaunpuri, also known as 'Kakilang Pirak' who lived and transmitted knowledge in Singapore around this period.

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