

VIEWPOINT: A CRITICAL DISCUSSION ON SUFISM

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the evolution and current state of Sufism, highlighting the need for a redefining of what it means to be a "Sufi" today. It draws from historical figures and scholars to highlight the corruption and commodification of Sufi practices. The article emphasizes the importance of knowledge and authenticity in maintaining spiritual integrity. It explores key themes in Sufi literature, such as divine love and spiritual quests, and addresses the problematic aspects of modern Sufi practices. Theoretical implications are considered.

Keywords: Sufism, literature, critical views, spiritual integrity, modern sciences.

INTRODUCTION

In the pre-Islamic era, however, Central Asia had written literature of Zoroastrianism, shamanism, monism, Buddhist currents, and the monism current had also given rise to a distinct poetry. From the Turkish Khaganate to the period when the Uyghurs came to power (M. 7th-9th centuries) were monian poems. The ideas of mysticism also began to be interpreted in Uzbek literature from the 11th to the middle of the 12th centuries. If in the epic "Qutadgü bilig" by Yusuf Khos Hajib, the great representative of Uzbek literature of the 11th century, the upbringing of a perfect person in the teachings of mysticism became the main idea, then in the work "Hibat ul-haqoyiq" by Ahmad Yugnaki, a great exponent of Uzbek literature of the 12th century, the acquisition of knowledge from important signs of perfection was promoted. In the eight-century period up to the beginning of the 20th century, the themes and ideas of mysticism were actively expressed in Uzbek classical literature. Critical debate on the doctrine of mysticism has become important in the study of classical works

LITERARY VIEWS AND METHODOLOGY

The term "Sufi" today is fraught with ambiguity and misinterpretation, leading to a necessity for redefinition and a critical examination. Historically, the essence of Sufism was rooted in a profound spiritual practice, but over time, it has been co-opted and commodified, deviating significantly from its origins (Mannopov, 2021). The authentic Sufi path, known as "Salik," signifies a genuine journey towards spiritual enlightenment. Yet, contemporary Sufism faces a crisis of authenticity, often perceived as a sect destined for decline (Juraev & Rajavaliyev, 2023).

Islamic scholars have long warned against the corruption of Sufi traditions, drawing upon the early observations of Shaykh Hasan al-Basri (642-728 CE), who lamented the transition of Sufism from a lived reality to a mere name. This critique underscores a broader historical perspective, where the Sahabah, the Holy Companions of Prophet Muhammad (570–632 CE), embodied Sufi principles without the label. Imam Ahmad ibn Ahmad az-Zarruq ash-Shadhili

(1442–1493 CE) encapsulated Sufism's core as "Sidq at-tawajjuh ilallah," or "sincere inner directedness to God Almighty," a definition that maintains its spiritual integrity (Juraev & Ahn, 2023).

In the Muslim world, the distinction between genuine Sufis ("Sufia") and pretenders ("Mutasawwifah") is crucial. Early Sufis were revered for their asceticism and devotion, exemplified by figures like Rabia al-Adawiyya (716–801 CE), who emphasized divine love over fear. However, the trajectory of Sufism has been marred by superficial practices and religious charlatanism, as seen in anecdotes about modern "Sufi" leaders who stray far from traditional Islamic teachings (Yusuf, 2022).

The problematic nature of "ignorant Sufis" is well-documented. Imam Ahmad ibn Ahmad az-Zarraq ash-Shadhili cautioned against these individuals, emphasizing the necessity of coupling Tasawwuf with knowledge to avoid deviations and innovations ("bid'ah"). Contemporary Sufi practices, often criticized for their excessive ritualism at the expense of fundamental religious duties, reflect a disconnection from the balanced approach advocated by Islamic tradition (Juraev & Rajavaliev, 2023).

Tasawwuf, or Sufism, is deeply embedded in Islamic scholarship, recognized even by critics like Ibn Abdul-Wahab. The science of Tasawwuf encompasses two primary aspects: character alignment with the Prophet's teachings and devotional practices leading to spiritual states ("Ahwal"). These states, though real, require careful balance to prevent spiritual psychosis, a phenomenon observed when excessive devotion leads to delusion (Juraev & Ahn, 2023).

Imam al-Ghazali's (1058-1111 CE) insights into Tasawwuf highlight its experiential nature. Describing it as "tasting" ("dhawq"), he likened the understanding of Sufism to experiencing the distinct sweetness of honey, a metaphor for the inexpressible nature of spiritual realization (Yusuf, 1997). True comprehension of Tasawwuf requires engagement with its practitioners, underscoring the importance of lived experience over theoretical knowledge (Mannopov, 2020). So, Sufism's enduring value lies in its ability to harmonize the spiritual and practical aspects of Islam, promoting mercy and divine love. However, its current state, plagued by misinterpretation and superficiality, necessitates a return to its foundational principles. Only through sincere inner directedness and knowledgeable practice can Sufism reclaim its rightful place as a central and transformative force in Islam (Yusuf, 2022).

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

As a philologist and literary critic, the discussion on Sufism presented in this article is profound, yet several areas could benefit from deeper exploration and theoretical grounding. Sufi literature studies inherently delve into themes of authenticity, spiritual practice, and historical evolution, making this topic highly relevant. However, there are theoretical implications and contextual considerations necessary for a comprehensive critique (Dickson, 2022).

The article rightly references key historical figures such as Shaykh Hasan al-Basri and Imam Ahmad ibn Ahmad az-Zarraq ash-Shadhili. However, it could benefit from a more rigorous philological analysis of their texts and sayings. Examining the original Arabic texts and their subsequent translations would offer insights into how the meanings and interpretations of "Sufi" and "Tasawwuf" have evolved over centuries. The intertextual relationships between

Sufi texts across different eras and regions are crucial. For instance, the influence of early Sufi works on later scholars like Imam al-Ghazali should be explored in greater detail. This analysis would highlight how Sufi concepts were transmitted, transformed, and sometimes distorted over time. The article mentions the oral transmission of Shaykh Hasan al-Basri's teachings, which is a vital aspect of Sufi literature. A philological approach would involve studying the chain of transmission (isnad) and the reliability of these oral sources. This could reveal how certain interpretations of Sufism became dominant or marginalized (Heitmeyer, 2011).

Sufi literature is rich with themes such as divine love, detachment from the material world, and the quest for spiritual truth. The article touches on these themes but could further explore how they are expressed through poetry, prose, and hagiographies. Analyzing literary devices, symbolism, and narrative structures in Sufi texts would provide a deeper understanding of their spiritual and aesthetic dimensions (Mannopov, 2020). The mention of Rabia al-Adawiyya is significant, yet the article could expand on the contributions of female mystics in Sufi literature. Exploring the representation of gender and the unique perspectives women brought to Sufism would enrich the discussion and reflect the diversity within Sufi traditions (Juraev & Rajavaliyev, 2023).

The critique of modern Sufism's divergence from its traditional roots is valid, but a literary critique should also consider contemporary Sufi literature. Examining how modern Sufi writers negotiate their identity and authenticity in a globalized world could provide a nuanced perspective on the ongoing evolution of Sufism (Figure 1).

Main Arguments and Key Words in Modern Sufism Critique

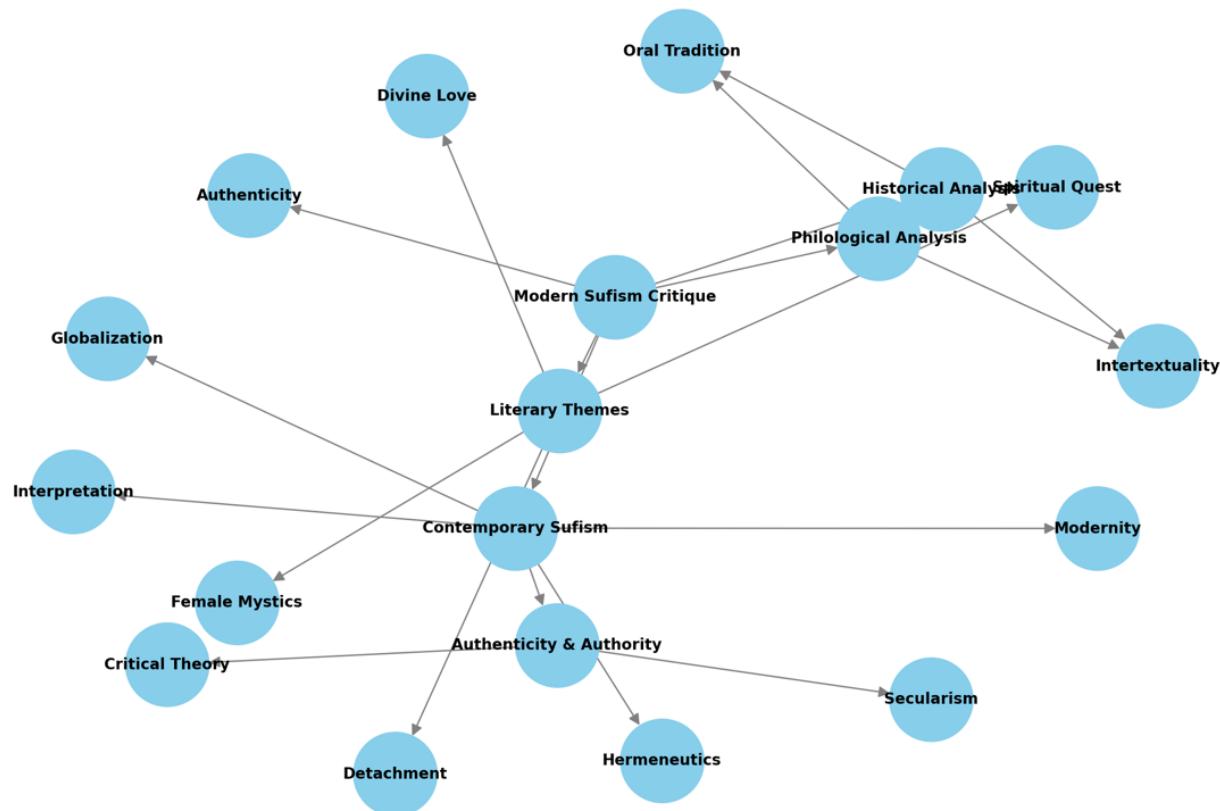


Figure 1. Main arguments and key words.

This diagram presents the main arguments and key words in the critique of modern Sufism, focusing on authenticity, historical analysis, philological analysis, literary themes, and contemporary Sufism. It highlights the complex interplay of ideas necessary for a comprehensive understanding of Sufi literature studies.

CONCLUSION

The article grapples with the question of what constitutes an "authentic" Sufi. Theoretical frameworks from postcolonial studies and critical theory could be applied to understand how power dynamics and cultural hegemony influence the construction of Sufi identity. This would involve questioning who has the authority to define Sufism and how these definitions impact the practice and perception of Sufism globally. Hermeneutical approaches are essential in Sufi studies, given the esoteric and often metaphorical nature of Sufi texts. The article should consider how different interpretive strategies—literal, allegorical, mystical—affect the understanding of Sufi teachings. This theoretical lens would clarify the tensions between various interpretations of Sufism (Mannopov, 2021).

The impact of modernity on Sufi traditions is a critical area of study. Theoretical discussions on secularism, modernity, and globalization could elucidate how Sufism adapts to contemporary challenges. This would involve analyzing the hybridization of Sufi practices and the commodification of Sufi symbols in popular culture. The article provides a compelling overview of the challenges facing modern Sufism, emphasizing the need for knowledge and authenticity. However, to fully engage with Sufi literature studies, it must incorporate a more detailed philological analysis, explore the rich literary themes of Sufi texts, and apply relevant theoretical frameworks. These additions would not only enhance the scholarly rigor of the critique but also offer a more holistic understanding of Sufism's past, present, and future.

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