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TAṢAWWUF AND WESTERN INTERESTS PERSPECTIVE OF HISTORY AND POLITICS

Abstract

This relationship between Sufism and politics presents itself at the heart of an emerging Western interest in Sufi political development. Western institutions have identified Taṣawwuf as viable option for shaping all forms of cooperation and understanding with the Muslim world. Such a choice however, stems from factual realities shown in the practice of some Sufi schools and historical developments. This inquiry seeks to explore the historical context of Sufism in relation to political engagement while elucidating its course of interaction as a demonstration of its very values and ideals. This paper also examines some of the similarities and differences between the attitudes of classical and contemporary Sufi practices vis-à-vis political life, and evaluates the evidences of both the current approaches to and interpretation of the position of Sufism in today's world. This research demonstrates the partial interpretation that favours a particular trend pertaining to Sufism and politics, and suggests that the defiant and politically active interpretation of Taṣawwūf is by large the dominant and historically consistent current in Sufi thought and practice.

Keywords: Taṣawwuf, Ṣufi Order, West, Politics, Sufism.

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Introduction

Rand Corporation is well known for its leading work in drafting strategies for the U.S. Foreign Policy towards global events including those of the Middle East. Its last report "Building Moderate Muslim Networks" however, presented some very serious issues. It caused the intelligentsia in both the Islamic and Western worlds to embark on a heated debate because of the gravity of the decisions and suggestions contained therein. Many voices have advocated cross-cultural dialogue and fraternal union among Civilizations. What is perhaps most striking in the report is its bold reference to the role of Sufism and its institutions in the dissolution of the ideological contrast between Muslim and Western civilization[2], whatever importance this question may entail, it represents a significant issue of dialogue at the international front. It is for this reason that this paper contributes to that debate using the historical context in which both the reality and role of Taṣawwuf emerged, evolved, and become crystallized. The rekindled interest in Sufism derives firstly from Arab academicians and researchers who are attracted to the increased number of joint seminars and conferences held in the West. These seminars and conferences are especially focused on the values and practices of Taṣawwuf, with special attention to the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī (d. 1239 AD) and Suhrawardī (d. 1190AD) among others.

The reason generating interest in the field of Taṣawwūf is the regional and global politics. This is because of the fact that Taṣawwuf in today's world constitutes a political model associated with the most lenient views on regional and international politics. But this is so only if Taṣawwūf is interpreted according to the pantheistic doctrines of Ibn 'Arabī or Suhrawārdī. The history of Taṣawwuf provides us rather with different perspective the exact role of Taṣawwūf and Sufis regarding vis-ā-vis politics. Foremost on many minds is the fact that Taṣawwūf represents a subservient current in Islamic political thought indifferent to Muslim political sovereignty. Other readings offer a starkly different picture, whereby Taṣawwūf and Sufis constitute a formidable obstacle against foreign invasion[3].

Yet, despite the increasing importance of this academic interest in Sufism however, studies on Taṣawwūf continue to suffer several deficiencies and lapses as far as its methodology is concerned. The most significant of these shortcomings is the generally opted attitude of approaching and interpreting Sufi literature and experiences through its subservience to philosophical doctrines without sufficiently examining the legitimacy of those very philosophical doctrines. This is particularly true in the practice of drawing repeated analogies from the doctrines of absorption, the incarnation of God in the human body *(ḥulūliyyah)* or the unity

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2   RAND, *Building Moderate Muslim Networks,* Centre for Middle East Public Policy, 2007, p. 26.

3   Heck Paul L, *Sufism and Politics: The Power of Spirituality*, Markus Wiener Publishers, Princeton USA, 2008, p. 27.

of existence *(wiḥdat al-wujūd).* The reader who follows the dozens of articles and studies that discuss the Sufi doctrine of "The Unity of Existence" of Ibn 'Arabī and others cannot help but get the impression that Taṣawwuf cannot be read except through such an interpretation; one which is deeply characterised by Christian doctrine of Pantheism. It is as if readers are made to believe that these are the only ideas Sufis have so far elaborated.[4]

I. Sufi Thought in the General Context of Islamicthought

Muslim scholars often approach Sufi thought according to the following three spectrums:

1. The Journeying Sufi Trend: It is a trend whereby researchers on Sufism adopt Sufis' comprehensive vision which integrates diverse dimensions of human life and the human relationship with God. According to this category, writings on Taṣawwūf are drawn, on the one hand, from the religious experiences allowed in Taṣawwuf; calling to defend Taṣawwūf and to exercise utmost effort to expel the grim picture of Taṣawwūf. On the other hand, researchers work hard to expel the current notion of the flexible nature of the principles of Taṣawwūf; and how they are characterized by absolute tolerance beyond the limits of Islamic set of beliefs and code of legislation.

2. The Salafi Trend: It views Taṣawwūf as having been departed from its original principles and thus all efforts are made to degrade and belittle Taṣawwūf, accusing it of waywardness and deviation. According to this view, Taṣawwūf with its faults and theological deviations impedes the development of the Muslim Nation and further causes its decline. Such an attitude towards Taṣawwūf is often associated with the Wahhābī School and its affiliates.

3. The Modern Western Trend: This is based on premises that are quite incompatible with the above. And while it stems from strong religious sentiments, this trend presumes that the Sufi atmosphere is the best possible Islamic environment to accept Western values because of it being replete with the values of complacency and inaction along with complete detachment from the world. According to this category, Sufis are completely absorbed in their values of hope to reaching the divine self, thus keeping themselves in isolation from social reality and consequently allowing the penetration of any foreign value. According to this group, Taṣawwūf is viewed as a unique characteristic which builds upon human freedoms and facilitates the smooth interaction with others, while acknowledging others' faith and rights. For this reason, it is possible to use Taṣawwūf as a way to encounter extremism, and also to adopt it as a fundamental religious framework for democracy. This trend seeks to popularize Taṣawwūf and portray it as the ideal

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4   Lane Jan Erik, *Religion and Politics: Islam and Muslim Civilization,* Ashgate Publishing, United Kingdom, 2009, p. 89.

solution to the crisis affecting Muslim societies. Hence, Taṣawwūf is viewed as the bridging ideology between Islam and the West. The agenda of this last group manifests itself in the proposal of an official Western institution like RAND. It is also found in the suggestions of many other writings among those engaged in Eastern and Islamic studies in the West, in addition to modernist Muslims who are influenced by modern Western perspectives and styles. What concerns us here however, is the last trend towards Sufism.

It should be noted however, that the first two views are essentially complementary. This is drawn from the history of Islamic thought which provides no evidence suggesting ideological struggle of an irreconcilable nature between these two. As early as Taṣawwūf was born, it has enjoyed a spirit which carried the sense of serious opposition to all impediments on Muslim sovereignty leading, at times, to bloody resistance. Taṣawwūf has gone through many stages and continues to evolve and take new forms and shapes. Since its start as an individual eagerness to fill every emotion with the love of God to becoming the dominant prescription of entire tribes and countries influencing politics and social institutions[5], Taṣawwūf has disappointed many of those who have envisioned its extinction either by remaining resilient against demeaning evaluation or its resilience against the currents of modernity affecting the Muslim world in later times.

On the contrary, regardless of the expectation for its extinction, Taṣawwūf could manage to recruit more people to its fold from various intellectual and social backgrounds. This resilient growth is a stark difference from what history has shown of other trends in Islamic thought whereby many sects become extinct such as the Muʿtazilites, Khārijites, and many other Shīʿites groups. This prompts a serious look into the factors of resilience of this trend and its interaction with the Muslim world. According to this expansive view, it befits us to ask regarding the tools of analysis of the western initiative towards the East, beginning with its encouragement of Taṣawwūf to its endorsing of the identity of the Sufis as being the successful bridge between the Easy and the West, and finding further substantiating historical events as evidences standing for their judgment and conclusions on the Taṣawwūf.

II. Western Project: Features and Employment of Sufism

Following Samuel Huntington's ideas regarding the clash of civilisation[6] Western politics - particularly American politics, has adhered to his ideas closely and seriously. Islam has become the central subject of much political discussions and deliberations, especially with regards to embracing the global culture and glo-

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5   Ibid, p. 65.

6   Huntington Samuel, *The Clash of Civilizations,* Simon Schuster Paperbacks, New York, 2002, p. 16-31.

balisation which challenge many values of the Muslim culture and faith. Perhaps the cultural incentive that motivates the West is wrapped in economic and imperialistic sentiments. In this, the Western call of 'terrorism' is seen as instrumentally simplifying of the process of change and enforcing of Western policies[7]. Eradicating terrorism and doing away with the culture of refusal of the products of Western culture; all energies are invested towards creating a system which will successfully confirm with and co-exist with Taṣawwūf.[8]

It appears that Western thinking still searches for a solution inherent in Islam itself. This represents an unwavering search for another option which carries an Islamic view of life while rejecting any tendency of refusal or rejection. This new interest has led to the deep study of the type of Muslim that the west is seeking after. The RAND report originates from the American experience with the Soviet Union spanning over seventy years. It suggests new ideas for interacting with 'Muslims' and ways of changing their beliefs and traditions. This appears to be achieved through calls for 'moderation' according to the American understanding and style. Following this, there is surprising precision in Western identification of the characteristics of 'moderate' and those who are sought after as a model for interaction between Islam and the West. According to the decisions of liberal secularists, the traditional Taṣawwūf of Islam does not threaten the Western agenda. This draft mentions three types of Muslims whom are described as 'moderate'. They are:

1.   "Liberal secularist", includes those who do not believe in the role of religion in life and who also conforms to the Western vision of life and the world. This group sees no problem in the total fusion with the Western value system.

2.   *"Enemies of the Shaykhs"* (as they are called in the draft) include the Atturturks, the proprietors of Turkish secularism[9]; and finally,

3.   "The Islamists" who do not see a contradiction between Western democracy and Islam; those who visit the tombs of the Sufis; and those who do not display any ijtihād.[10]

According to the draft, "changing religion is not an easy process, but it is possible". The draft cites the example of transforming the Ottoman Empire into a secular state.[11] This has caused thinkers and policy makers in the West to think about deriving an appropriate form of 'Islam'. Their hope is to besiege 'Sunni Islam' with the help of thinkers whom they regard as important sources of informa-

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7   For more details see: Natalia Vlas, Is Religion Inherently Violent? Religion as a threat and promise for the globle security. *Politics and Religion Journal*, autumn 2010, Vol. IV, No. 2. Belgrade.

8   Islamic News Agency, A new strategy toward the Islamic World, *http://www.islamicnews.net*, (accessed 1.11. 2008)

9   Rand, p. 44.

10   Ibid, p. 98.

11   Ibid, p. 100.

tion including Stephen Schwartz, Ali al-Ahmed and others who are concerned with reversing the trends of rejection in the Islamic world. This is particularly true in the case of those who undertake political projects and fusion between Islamic Law and liberal intellectual persuasions. A paragraph which addresses this particular topic reads; "verily Taṣawwūf, with its emotional, musical and philosophical rituals, presents a bridge to leave the folds of religion.".[12] The importance of this draft is not as evident as its bold suggestions. Khafājī, the previous Director of General Relations between Islam and America (CAIR), opines that RAND is an important mechanism in the American institution. Its previous 2004 draft, with the title "Igniting the Struggle between Sunni and Shīʿi and "Enemies of Saudi" manifests itself in American politics, demonstrating thus the danger of its real applications. It is interesting to note however, that this report is yet to be made public by the American government.[13]

Many now bet on Taṣawwūf's potential to sustain the future of Islam. This wager, in the form of a strategic vision of the future of the Muslim nation is not baseless. It is founded on a series of long debated questions on whether Taṣawwūf offers solutions for the crises affecting contemporary politics; whether Taṣawwūf can bridge between Islam and liberalism; and whether the values of Sufism can promote civilizational dialogue, eradicates religious aggression, extremism and terrorism? Such a vision is largely coloured by the experience of the Naqshabandī Sufi Order in Turkey whereby they have absorbed secular values and ideas. Their religious ideals continue to grow with the ever changing environment which conveniently suits democratic values and administrations.[14] The Americans for instance draw on the experience of Taṣawwūf in Senegal; an important country in which Sufi schools continue to wield significant influence on politics. Although the Sufi school in the Senegal injects deep religious views into political arena, it has no constraints in associating their Islamic values with political leaders adopting the French secular politics. Such political leaders belong to Sufi Tarīqahs and continuously supplement their political life with regular participation in Sufi *zikr* (ritual of remembrance).[15]

In Turkey, beginning with Najm al-Dīn Arbakan (d. 2011), the leader of the Rafah Party and a notable personality in the Naqshabandī order (Ṭarīqah), and one of his disciples Tayīb Rajab Ardogan, the leader of the Justice and Development Party; ancient Sufi traditions were simply marginalised. Its inherent nature of tolerance, acceptance and recognizing others were deceptively interpreted and

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12   Schwartz Stephen, Identification of Sufism, *The Weekly Standard*, 07 February 2005, p. 15,Washington.

13   Islamic News Agency, A new strategy toward the Islamic World, *http://www.islamicnews. net*, (accessed 13.07. 2008).

14   Schwartz, Ibid, p. 34

15   Glover John, *Sufism and Jihad in Modern Senegal: The Murid Order*, University of Rochester Press, Rochester USA, 2009, p. 32.

exploited in a way that establishes political ties with democracies otherwise prohibited in Islam. In addition to this, they adopt Taṣawwuf's values of kindness, brotherhood and patient endurance of evils as a means to calm religious disapprovals of the environment which, simultaneously acts as a means of fostering secular values and supports their plans for development.[16]

Nevertheless, history bears witness to the crucial role of political Taṣawwuf in shaping the direction of the Muslim nation. This claim appears to be true whether or not its role is limited and subdued, as in the case of Egypt, or widespread such as the Mahdīsm in Sudan, the Sunūsiyyah, the Qādiriyyah, and the Tijāniyyah in Central and West Africa, the Naqshabandīyyah and Mawlawīyyah in Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Indian subcontinent and elsewhere. It is that dormant and limited scope of Sufi practices in Egypt that is targeted by American and Western interests whereby Shaykhs of Sufi orders support policies of their governing authorities without taking the trouble to criticize emerging political issues. Such an attitude enables politician to gain Shaykh's wholehearted support whether or not her views contradict his worldview.[17] This complacent attitude is prevalent in many Muslim countries such as Syria, Algeria, and Morocco; it provides officials extended periods of office despite unfavourably negative public opinion. According to Kaplan, the Committee for Religious Liberty in the American Congress has urged Arab countries to practice religious liberty while encouraging this particular brand of Taṣawwūf.[18] Their opinion is that the Sufi doctrines based on abstinence from life (*zuhd*) and political indifference weaken Muslim political resolve and thus strengthens the grip of Western colonialism, which carries a sense of rejection of all forms of subversion, particularly the adoption of western colonial values.

Al-Masīrī's description of Western political attitude towards Sufi movements *is* not far from today's reality regarding the propagation of Sufi Islam in addition to the increasing media coverage of their activities.[19] Yet, to further understand the relationship between the West and Sufi movements, we may draw on the conference held at the Nixon Centre (U.S.A) in October 2003, organized and funded by the Pentagon.[20] One of its themes was about understanding Taṣawwūf and its position in the support of American Policies. It is interesting to note however, that this conference was held two years after the tragic event of September 11, and only a few months following the fall of Baghdad. The main purpose of this

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16   Ibid, p. 32.

17   Hassan Ammār Ali. *Sufism and Politics in Egypt*, Dār Sharqiyah li al-Nashr, Cairo, 2007, p. 21.

18   Kaplan David, Hearts, Minds, and Dollars. *U.S News & World Report*. April. 25. 2005, http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/050425.

19   Masīrī 'Abd al-Wahhāb, Islam and the West, Al-Jazeera net. *http://www.aljazeera.net* (Accessed 17.05. 2009).

20   Ūdah 'Ammār, Kurrāsāt 'Istrātijiyah, *Strategic Treaties journal*, Vol.7/ No. 1/13, Cairo, December 2002, pp. 18-25.

conference was to introduce a moderate and civilized Islam to American decision makers. Bernard Lewis was one among the prominent scholars participating in this conference. In his work 'Two Faces of Islam: the House of *Saʿud* from Tradition to Terror', Schawrts discusses few interesting points in his chapter on 'Understanding Taṣawwūf'. He asserts:

"Sufi teachings are not limited to an internal Muslim discussion on the separation between the spiritual authority of Sufi leaders and the judicial authority of Muslim jurists but also includes a profound respect for non-Muslims whatsoever their creed be it Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and all other religious affiliations. On top of this, Taṣawwūf emphasizes strict observation of their primary values of kindness and mutual cooperation between Muslims regardless of their particular denominations".[21]

The author also illustrates Sufi tolerance towards other creeds than Islam saying:

"Verily the history of Taṣawwūf is replete with examples of religious harmony, a stark difference to the extremist separatist trend characteristic of Islamic fundamentalism. An example of this is the mutual sharing of Balkan and Turkish Sufis and Christians of their religious temples. Similarly, Sufis in West Africa have assimilated with local idolatry traditions and practices".[22]

It is worthwhile noting Schwartz's repeated citation of tolerance as a characteristic of Taṣawwūf. Tolerance in this context appears to have no defined boundaries. For Schwartz, the inherent Sufi magnanimity manifests in its tolerance and flexibility to interact with the teachings of other religions. To better illustrate his point Schwartz draws on the example of Taṣawwūf in Kurdistan and Iraq, who supported the operations of the American forces in the region.[23] Schwartz does not forget to advise Western policy makers that their interest lies in learning more about Taṣawwūf and in interacting and engaging Sufi leaders. For him, this is an easy method of realizing Western agenda, from Pristina in Kosovo to Kachgar in China, and from Fez in Morocco to Jakarta in Indonesia. Schwartz further advises all policy makers to financially and morally support this particular brand of Taṣawwūf".[24] On the other hand, Bernard Lewis in his capacity as a head consultant for he Pentagon and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Islamic issues wholeheartedly supports this project. He believes that it is not possible to put an end or marginalise Muslim fundamental movements that appeared in the end of the 70s and 80s except through encouragement of Sufi movements and values.[25]

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21   Schwartz Stephen, *The Two Faces of Islam: The House of Sa'ud from Tradition to Terror*, Anchor Books, USA, 2002, p. 30

22   Ibid, p. 32.

23   Ibid, p. 34.

24   Ibid, p. 37.

25   Bernard Lewis, *the Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror*, Random House Trade

Both proposals of Schwartz and Lewis appear to have affected the agendas of Western governments set for the Middle East. One example is found in the Tony Blair's 2001 address to Muslim leaders in his call for Muslims to support 'mainstream' Islam. His use of the term 'mainstream' accords the Sufi prescription of Islam. Similarly the then U.S. Secretary of State Collin Powel in November 2001 address at the University of Lewisville, Kentucky, stated that the American Government has developed a clear view of Islamic societies based on specific values related to the cultural, political and religious historical developments of those societies. The intended meaning of 'historical developments' used here, according to al-Fayyūmī, refers to the Sufi tradition.[26] This further explains why since November 2005 the American Ambassador to Egypt regularly attends the yearly festival commemorating the Egyptian Sufis Ahmed al-Badawī. Ambassador publicly admires the Sufi values of truth and tolerance[27]. Following his public announcement, a joint cooperation between USA and Egypt evolves to setting the first Sufi television channel for the propagation of Sufi teachings and values.[28]

What has so far been discussed represent a fragment of the proposed approaches and projects promoting Sufi movements and ideals. Another advanced approach is found in the U.S. News and World Report (2005), entitled 'Minds, Hearts and Money'. This report mentions the following:

"American strategists increasingly think that Sufi Movements, with its global branches, is perhaps the best weapon to deal with Muslim fundamentalism… the terms of this suggested approach includes utilizing American support to rebuild Sufi shrines and to preserve classical Sufi manuscripts in addition to encouraging governments to actively support Sufi movements in their respective countries".[29]

It is interesting to note however, that the examination of the history of Sufism only demonstrates a form that is starkly different from what is popularly practiced today and for which has attracted increasing Western interests. Subkī (d.1370AD) realizes the risk of mistakes associated with the true Sufi identity. He states: "If you understand that the chosen among creation are the Sufis, then be aware that there are those who imitate (their practices) yet are not from among them, thus causing people to doubt (the true Sufis)".[30] Examination of the historical development of Sufism reveals how its historical realities challenge current Sufi practices. In its historically classical stage of development, Sufism propagated a

Paperbacks, New York, 2004, p.56.

26   Fayūmī, Aḥmad, The Modified Islam after 11th September 2001. *Al-Ahram Newspaper*, 14 January 2002, p. 54, Cairo.

27   *The Middle East Newspaper*. 18 November 2005, p.13, London.

28   Ibid, p.14.

29   Kaplan, Ibid.

30   Subkī Taj al-Dīn, *Tabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyah,* Al-Salāsil Publisher, Bagdad, 1993, vol. 10: p.283.

worldview that profoundly adhered to the fundamental Islamic tenets of mono-theism while balancing between action and spirituality. According to this view of existence and in view of the human responsibility in this world, both faith and action engage all areas of human life, in political or private spheres of life. There is perhaps no better evidence that support this other than the initial appearance of Taṣawwūf which was a direct result of political and social dissatisfaction be-cause of the degeneration of core Islamic practices during the Umayyad rule (661–750AD). Many pious and saintly Muslims like Abdullah ibn al-Mubārak (d.797AD) and Shaykh al-Jazūlī (d.1465AD) abandoned cities and public office for fortified military encampments and therein actively participated in resistance.[31]

III. Overview of the Positive Stand of Taṣawwūf Vis-á-Vis Politics

Throughout history, Taṣawwūf appears to have integrated both forms of Jihad mentioned in the ḥadīth stating the following: "We have come back from the minor Jihād to the major one"[32]. The major Jihad concerns the purification of the human self and constitutes the internal preparation of the self, smoothening thus the enactment of the lesser form of physical Jihad. Ill trained souls are incapable of neither repulsing the enemy nor posing any threat to them.[33]

Ḍayf argues that they correct the mistaken view of Taṣawwūf presented through the efforts of those abstaining and profoundly pious Muslims. Sufis exer-cising *zuhd* did not refrain from the business of life but were rather deeply engaged in society and were ready to defend their homeland.[34] We find for instance that despite Ibn al-Jawzī's negative stand to Sufis and Sufism, he dedicated a special chapter in his book entitled *'Ṣafwāt al-Ṣafwah'* to discuss the experiences of early Muslim saints who showed abstinence from material life and who were also sta-tioned in the fortified encampments at the frontiers of the Muslims borders in 2nd AH/8th AD). Among those saints mentioned by Ibn al-Jawzī was Ahmad ibn 'Āṣim al-Antākī known then as the *Spy of the Hearts* because of his keen perception of the state of people's hearts, and Abdullah ibn al-Mubārak (d.797AD) whom Khatīb al-Baghdādī (d.1071 AD) describes as follow: "He was among the pious scholar of profound knowledge, popular for his abstinence from life. He left Baghdad for al-Masisah which is a Roman border encampment and all the Sufis left with him. Muslim biographers inform us that ibn al-Mubārak liked to be alone and cherished solitude.[35]

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31   Maḥmūd 'Abdul Ḥalīm, *The Mysticism in Ibn Sina Thought*, Madbūlī li al-Nashr, Cairo, 1981, p. 57.

32   Al-'Ajlūnī Ismā'īl, *Kashf al-Khafā'*, Al- Rissāla Madbūlī li al-Nashr, Damascus, 2001, p. 424.

33   Chalabī, Ahmed, *Al-Jihād fī al-Fikr al-Islāmī*, AL-Nahḍah al-Jadīdah, Cairo, 2001, p. 424.

34   Ḍayf, Shawqī, *The History of Arabic Literature*, Misr li al-Nashr, Cairo, 1972, p. 403.

35   Baghdādī al-Khaṭīb, *History of Bagdad*, Ibn Khathīr li al-Nashr, Damascus, 1985, Vol. 10,

Ibn ʿAsākir (d.1175 AD) introduces the famous Sufi Master *Ibrahim* ibn Adhām as a bold and courageous knight stationed in Muslim border encampments, and who fought the Byzantine Empire. He mentions that Imam Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal and al-Awzāʿī and Sufyān al-Thawrī testifies to ibn Adhām's faith, courage, piety and *zuhd.* One of the strong opinion regarding his death is mentioned in Ibn Kathīr according to whom he died stationed in a Muslim encampment located somewhere in the Mediterranean Islands.[36] There were many other saints who had active lives and were socially engaged like Shafīq al-Balkhī and Ḥatim al-Aṣṣam. Ibn Sīnā (d.1037 AD) describes Sufis as follows: "Certainly, a Ṣufi is brave because he is not afraid of death. He is also generous since he refrains from falsehoods, and is certainly tolerant".[37]

Another testimony showing the sufis' social engagement and positive influences on the Muslim nation is found in the example of their urging their students to join was against Kings and Princes who instigate war. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 1258AD) for instance is an ample example of military resistance. Biographers mention his participation in the battle of al-Manṣūrah in the year 1249 AD.[38] Among his distinguished students was Abū al-Abbās al-Mursī described by Ibn Tagrī Bārdī as follows: "He is the most knowledgeable Imām of his time and was one of those who frequently stationed themselves in Muslim boarder encampments".[39] Imām al-ʿIzz ibn ʿAbd al-Salām (d. 1261AD) known as the Sultan of Scholars also participated in the battle of ʿAyn Jalūt in the year 1259AD. He was known for his engagement in public affairs, for being the leader of the political opposition, and for his championing the causes of the oppressed against tyrannical and oppressive leaders. His association with Sufi schools cannot be doubted as there are many evidences showing that he was indeed a distinguished Sufi. Al-Suyūṭī describes him in the following: "The famous Shihāb al-Suhrawardī dressed him up the garb of the Sufi.".[40]

It is interesting to note in this context Ibn Arabī's statement: "One must strive for the great Jihād against one's desires, for if you achieve this epic challenge, nothing is left for you except the lesser *Jihād* (in wartime) of which, if you are to die and become a martyr, you will live forever".[41] Ibn Arabi's statement clearly contradicts the current views placing Ibn Arabī in complacent position dur-

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p.157.

36   Ibn Kathīr Ismāʿīl, *Al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya,* Ibn Hazm li al-Nashr, Beirut, 1966, Vol.10, p. 44.

37   Maḥmūd ʿAbdul Ḥalīm, *The Mysticism in Ibn Sina Thought, Madbūlī* li al-Nashr, Cairo, 1981, p. 45.

38   Maḥmūd ʿAbdul Ḥalīm, *Al-Shādhilī: Sufi, Struggle and God Knowing*, Dār Miṣr li al-Nashr, Cairo, 1967, p. 60.

39   IbnTaghrī Bardī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, Madbūlī li al-Nashr, Cairo, Vol 7, p. 371.

40   Suyūṭī, Jalaluddīn, Ḥusn al-Muḥāḍarah, Madbūlī li al-Nashr, Cairo, 1967, Vol. 1, p. 315.

41   Ibn ʿArabī Muḥyīddīn, *Al-Waṣāya,* Al-Fikr al-Muʿāṣir li al-Nashr, Damascus, 1985, p. 49

ing the Crusade wars in Syria (1009 AD). What draws our attention however is the phenomenon during the Ayūbite Dynasty (1171-1341), considered by many as one of glorious Muslim periods, during which Taṣawwūf governed the emotions and sentiments of the masses. There also existed a close connection between the Zankī family, and the Ayyūbites and the Sufi leaders which, provided a formidable resistance against the onslaught of the crusaders. Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd Zankī (d. 1174 AD), a famous leader prior to Ṣalāh al-Dīn (d. 1173 AD), was not only a Sufi, but used to encourage other Sufis to protecting the Muslim land from the onslaught of the crusaders. Ibn Shuhbah reported the following: "He gathered the Sufi Shaykhs and brought them close to him and showed compassion and kindness towards them. When a Sufi Shaykh gets close to him, he would then rise and seat him down close to him, and converse with him…"[42]. In his *Wafayāt al-Aʿyān* Ibn Khalikkān (d. 1282 AD) said: "Some of his friends reprimanded him for his kindness towards Sufis said: "I do not wish to win except through them… How can I severe relations with people who fight with an arrow that never errs?".[43] Salāh al-Dīn al-Ayūbī (d. 1173 AD) continued to utilise Sufi resources. It is reported that in the midst of battle he would consult with Sufi leaders whose presence provided him with extra incentive for their followers to fight courageously in the battle. According to al-Maqrīzī, Ṣalāh al-Dīn was the first Muslim leader to build Sufi Khanikāh's (place of solitude) in Egypt and endowed to Sufi causes a considerable portion of the public endowment *(awāqf)*.[44]

When we turn our attention to Muslim Western (Maghreb), we also see the diverse active contributions of Sufi movements to the establishment of many Muslim states in North and West Africa. In the Middle of the Fifth Century AH for instance, The Murabiṭūn State was established in one of the basis of the Sufi *Ribāṭs* at the hands of Abdullāh ibn Yāsīn (d. 1059AD). The Murabiṭūn state was highly successful in extending its boarders from Senegal to Muslim Spain. Among its prominent personalities Yusuf ibn Tashfīn (d. 505 AH) who was both the third leader of the state as well as the hero of the Battle of al-Zallāqah in al-Andalūs (1086 AD).[45]

In modern times however, al-Amīr ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jazā'irī was first inducted as the leader of the Qadiriyyah Sufi order and then a leader of the resistance against the French occupation. ʿAbd al-Qādir continuously persisted in resistance for a period of fifteen years until he exhausted all means of resistance, upon which he decided to leave to Syria and to dedicate himself solely to scholarship. In Syria,

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42   Ibn Qāḍī Chuhba, *Al-Kawākib al-Duriyyah fi al-Sīrah al-Fūriyah*, Al-Athīr li al-Nashr, Beirut, 1971, p.38.

43   Ibn Khalikkān Shams al-Dīn, *Wafayāt al-'Aʿyān* , The Arabic Thought Publisher, Beirut, 1999, Vol .5, p. 188.

44   Maqrīzī Taqī al-Dīn, *Al-Khuṭaṭ wa al-'Āthār*, Al-Athīr li al-Nashr, Cairo, 1980, Vol. 2, p. 415.

45   Dandech ʿIṣmāt, *Al Murabiṭūn wa-Dawruhum fi Nashr al-Islam fī Gharb Afrīqiyyah*, *Dār al-Gharb* li al-Nashr, Beirut, 1988, p. 15.

he spent many years near the shrine of Ibn Arabī. His will was that he be buried next to Ibn Arabī. In India, Abū Hasan al-Nadwī mentions how the effects of Sufi preaching affected the general populace and how their strict observation of the Sharī'ah eliminated the selling of alcohol in Calcutta. In India, we also find Sufi movements promoting awareness for the expulsion of the British.[46]

The above overview challenges our current view of the Sufis abstinence from public affairs; to set a rather a positive involvement in society. Sufis' tirelessly defence of Muslim sovereignty throughout the History of Islam makes it extremely difficult to only adhere to the popularised brand of Taṣawwūf' which has seen few historical manifestations and achievements than a far more comprehensive brand of Taṣawwūf'. It would not be objective either to argue that the restricted brand of Taṣawwūf' promoted by the West is non-existent in Muslim tradition; it certainly exists, and thus requires that we turn attention to some historical events supporting its credibility.

IV. Negative Manifestations of Sufi Movements

Taṣawwūf is often attributed to the period of decline in the Muslim civilization and is even perceived as the cause of Muslim decline. It is perhaps true to argues that in certain historical cases Taṣawwūf has in fact been the cause of decline. According to what has been hitherto discussed, Taṣawwūf can often carry dual implications as it can accept both interpretations i.e. it can be both individualistic mystical experience and lifestyle as well as privately and publicly interactive. History bears evidence to both brands of Taṣawwūf. In his work entitled 'Awārif al-Ma'ārif', al-Suhrawardī provided us with a dialogue between two Sufis. One of them wrote to his friend to encourage him to join resistance against the enemy. His friend response was that he was confronted by many trials, that the door was closed, and that there was no escape. The first friend wrote back to him and said that if all Muslims become engaged in such practices, they would indeed end in their loss and their enemies' victory. His argument was that Jihad and battle were necessary. His friend's final response was that if all Muslims were engaged in his spiritual practice and were to recite the glory of God (Allah Akbar) while sitting on their prayer mats in their prayer rooms, the walls of Constantinople would have crumbled under such force.[47]

In a more recent times however, we find historical evidences suggesting that the French colonial forces encountered strong resistance of the citizens of Tunis, who were reported to have had secret communications with one Sufi leader in Tunis. Yet in one of the mornings, his students found him sad and asked why he was sad. His response was that he had a dream in which he met al-Khiḍr and Abul

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46   Nadwī AbulHasan, *Muslims in India,* Al-Hādī li al-Nashr, Damascus, 2002, p. 140-146.

47   Sahrawardī Shahab al-Dīn, *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif* , Dār al-Jīl li al-Nashr, Beirut, 1999, p. 166.

'Abbās al-Shādhīlī, both of whom were holding the reins of the French general's horse, thus giving him Tunisia. He commented: "this is the Will of Allah, so what can we do?!' On hearing this, his disciples imitated the Shaykh's resignation, thus allowing the French colonial forces to enter Tunisia without much resistance.[48]. The French Historian Andre Julian discusses the politics of the French colonials to subdue resistance and serve their purposes. He said: "The French Government has identified that the way to win Sufi movements to their cause is through supporting and financing them."[49]. In support of this position, Philip Fondas a prominent French colonialist remarked: "It has become incumbent upon French colonial administrators along with French troops in Africa to support and promote Sufi movements because they have proven to be most obedient towards French authorities and more understanding and disciplined than other pagan groups…"[50].

The above historical incidents further substantiate that fact that Taṣawwūf has two faces, and can be found to be both the cause for intellectual and spiritual estrangement. It is this rift that distances Sufi schools from their original sources from which the individualistic brand of Taṣawwūf evolves. Besides, when Sufi schools observe a close relationship with its classical texts and sources of learning they gradually acquire the status of an interactive brand of Taṣawwūf.

V. The Complexity of Politics in Taṣawwūf:

Degradation of Sufi movements prevailed as a result of the Salafi attacks. Sufi thought is associated with limited scope of activity away from understanding their historical accounts of political life.[51] Sufis are also accused of having negligent impact on politics. It is also propagated that the religion of Islam is either spiritual and individualistic or material and interactive because it is argues that both trajectories of Islamic expression cannot coexist in one single person. In spite of the observations and statements, it remains clear however that there exists a spiritual character in the sphere of politics whilst, at the same time, there exists a sense of communal interactivity with political implications within spiritual solitude. For many, religion is purely an act of spiritual worship that engenders a series of values for the private consumption of intellect and soul, becoming integral part shaping vision of life[52]. Subscribers to the negative view of Taṣawwūf base their view on the principle that spirituality can only manifests following material failure. This is understood in light of the fact that when a person looses struggle for economic

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48   Lanm R, *The History of Northwest Africa*, Springer Publisher, London, 1990, p. 134.

49   Julian Charle Andre, *L'histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, Lion Publisher, Paris, 1985, p. 120.

50   Mubārak Zaki, *The Islamic Sufism*, Al-Nahḍah al-Jadīdah li al-Nashr, Cairo, 1977, Vol. 1, p. 34.

51   For more details see: Miroljub Jevtic, Political Science and Religion, *Politics and religion,* spring 2007, *Vol1* No 1, p 62, Belgrade.

52   Ibid, p. 62.

gains, may begin to look and search for relief in spirituality. This group however, fails to recognise that the initial appearance of abstinence *(zuhd)* and Taṣawwūf originated as reaction to political circumstances.

It is in this context that we can reasonably suggest that researchers in this field of study need to critically review their research trends and their knowledge about the Sufi minds and souls. It is hoped that their review would help identify and engage all diverse forms and shapes of Taṣawwūf. These questions set Taṣawwuf in a stage of political life within the framework of continuous Islamic development.

Conclusion

One cannot deny that Taṣawwūf continues to play a significant role in the shaping of contemporary Muslim life and that it has imposed itself in all walks of Muslim life. It also continues to display solid evidence of resilience and strength, a stark cry from the tens and probably thousands of ideologies and philosophical schools dotting the course of Islamic history. In reality, Taṣawwūf has developed into a phenomenon far removed from its original appearance of being solely engrossed in individual acts of ritual worship and the cultivation of the spiritual self. It has developed into an expansive institution stretching across continents and influencing millions of believers. Therefore Taṣawwūf cannot be easily categorized according to one or two popularized versions. Taṣawwūf is a force that combines within its adherents a wide mixture of various sentiments. At times, it encourages a communal role of political, developmental and social activity among others, while at other times invites to cosmic reflection and spiritual introspection. Taṣawwūf can encourage cultural understanding and civilizational dialogue; in some interpretations it has even attempted to bring the Muslim world closer to international culture, specifically to the Western interests in the regions.

But in the face of this seemingly calm and docile religious prescription, exists a rich legacy of resistance to foreign occupation and unwavering support for religious and political sovereignty. In Taṣawwūf, we find both the patient and understanding Shaykh and the unshakable determined warrior. In short, Taṣawwūf is what psychologists define as 'Multi-value' which means presenting contradictory and opposing values. This means that Sufi thought consists of practical and societal values, as well as individualistic and spiritual values at the same time. It is the role of history to tell us which dimension of Taṣawwūf has been more dominant at specific times. Based on our historical findings, we believe that Taṣawwūf has produced a trend of political activity and opposition that is radical and revolutionary, as in the example of al-Amīr 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā'īrī (d. 1883AD), and a disheartening, supine position, as in the case of the Tijānīyyah Sufi order in Algeria. The shape and form along with the values and teachings of Sufi institutions are not one and the same from which we can draw final inference, nor can they be generalized into a single uniformity of values and ideas, as America is currently attempting. History

provides examples of Sufi schools leading political opposition resulting, in some cases, to the establishment of a new social and political order as was the case of the Sanūsīyyah and Mahdīyyah movements. On the other hand, we have examples of Sufi schools attempting to forge ties with Western democratic thought cooperating in various ways with foreign philosophies and ideologies like the Tijānīyyah and 'Alawīyyah. In short, we find Sufis active in parliament just as we find them quaint and undisturbed in *Zawiyyahs*. It seems that it all depends on how Sufi thought chooses to express itself and to interact with history and society.

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ТАСАВУФ И ЗАПАДНИ ИНТЕРЕСИ - ПЕРСПЕКТИВЕ ИСТОРИЈЕ И ПОЛИТИКЕ

Резиме

Веза између суфизма и политике налази се у средишту настајућег интересовања Запада за политички развој суфизма. Западне институције су идентификовале тасавуф као одрживу опцију за обликовање свих форми сарадње и разумевања са муслиманским светом. Такав избор, међутим, потиче од чињеничне стварности приказане у пракси неких суфијских школа и од историјског развоја. Истраживање испитује историјски контекст суфизма у односу на политички ангажман, разјашњавајући притом ток интеракције као демонстрацију његових правих вредности и идеала. Овај рад такође испитује неке од сличности и разлика у ставовима класичних и савремених практичара суфизма vis-à-vis политичког живота, те евалуира како доказе о савременим приступима суфизму, тако и интерпретацију положаја суфизма у данашњем свету. Ово истраживање приказује делимичну, пристрасну интерпретацију у корист одређеног тренда који се односи на суфизам и политику. Истраживање, такође, сугерише да је изазовна и политички активна интерпретација тасавуфа у великој мери доминантна и историјски конзистентна струја у суфијској мисли и пракси.
Кључне речи: тасавуф, суфијски ред, Запад, политика, суфизам.