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SOME ISSUES RELATED TO THE HISTORY OF THE EMERGENCE OF THE SUFI ORDER IN CENTRAL ASIA

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Abstract. Introduction. It is known that scientific research on the history of the emergence of Sufism in Central Asia has been conducted for a long time, but the issue of discourse on this direction of Islam remains relevant to this day. Therefore, the article examines new approaches and research results related to the history of the emergence of Sufism in Central Asia. Goals and objectives. Analyzing the works of domestic and foreign researchers related to the history of the emergence of the Islamic religion in Central Asia, identify the problems of the spread and spiritual values of the Sufi movement. Discuss the problem of discourse related to Islam in modern studies and identify how the Sufi order influenced the spiritual life of the peoples of Central Asia. Asia. Materials and methods. Focusing on the actual value of religious works, Historiographic analysis of the history of the Sufi order in Central Asia, the use of the differentiation method form the methodological basis of the research work. These methods allow us to see the relationship between divine, Islamic and Sufi sermons in the nomadic Kazakh Steppes. By analyzing medieval religious works, we can understand the unique religious and philosophical knowledge of the Sufi order from written scientific works. Results. Based on research on the problem of Islam, new approaches to the history of the emergence of Sufism in Central Asia and the results of the research are considered. The works discussed were devoted to the cultural and spiritual characteristics of the mystical movement of Islam, which was formed and experienced a process of development over the course of tens of centuries. For example, the direction, political, social and ideological functions of the Sufi sect «Yasaviy» widespread in the Kazakh Steppe and the hidden protest against classical Islam were determined. Conclusion. It was believed that the ancient beliefs of the ancient Turks and Mongols had a great influence on the religion of Islam, which was a belief in



the so-called Sufism and divinity. It can be said that the teachings and path of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, a religious movement that is one of the Sufi confessions called «Yasaviyya», played a significant role in the religious development of the peoples of Central Asia.

Keywords: Central Asia, Sufi sect, belief in divinity, Islamic discourse, civilizational values.

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ОРТАЛЫҚ АЗИЯДА СОПЫЛЫҚ ОРДЕННІҢ ПАЙДА БОЛУ ТАРИХЫНА ҚАТЫСТЫ КЕЙБІР МӘСЕЛЕЛЕР

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Аңдатпа. Кіріспе. Орталық Азия жерінде сопылық ағымның пайда болу тарихына қатысты ғылыми зерттеулер бұрыннан бері-ақ жазылып келе жатқаны белгілі, алайда исламның осы бағытына қатысты дискурс мәселесі әлі күнге дейін өзекті болып келеді. Сондықтан мақалада Орталық Азиядағы сопылық тариқатының пайда болу тарихына қатысты жаңаша көзқарастар мен зерттеу нәтижелері қарастырылады. Зерттеудің мақсаты мен міндеттері. Орталық Азиядағы ислам дінінің пайда болу тарихына қатысты отандық және шетелдік зерттеушілердің еңбектеріне талдау жасай отырып, сопылық ағымның таралуы мен рухани құндылықтарына қатысты мәселесін айқындау. Қазіргі заманғы зерттеулердегі исламға қатысты дискурсы мәселесіне талқылап және сопылық тариқаттың Орталық Азия халықтарының рухани өміріне қалай ықпал еткенін ашып көрсету. Материалдар мен *әдістер*. Діни шығармалардың мәніне тоқтала отырып, Орталық Азия жеріндегі сопылық тариқат тарихына қатысты тарихнамалық талдау, саралау әдісін қолдану зерттеу жұмысының әдіснамалық негізін құрайды. Бұл әдістер көшпелі қазақ Даласындағы тәңіршілдік, ислам және сопылық уағыздардың өзара байланысын көруге мүмкіндік береді. Ортағасырлық діни шығармаларды саралай отырып, жазылған ғылыми еңбектерден сопылық орденнің өзіне тән діни-философиялық танымын түсіне аламыз. Нәтижелер. Орталық Азия аумағында сопылықтың пайда болу тарихына қатысты жаңаша көзқарастар мен мен зерттелу нәтижелері ислам мәселесі туралы зерттеулер негізінде қарастырылды. Ондаған ғасырлар бойы қалыптасып, даму үдерісін басынан көшірген исламның бұл мистикалық ағымының мәдени-рухани ерекшеліктеріне қатысты шығармалар талқыланды. Мәселен, қазақ даласында кеңінен тараған сопылықтың йасави тариқатының бағыты, саяси-әлеуметтік және идеологиялық функциялары мен классикалық исламға қарсы жасырын наразылығы айқындалды. Қорытынды. Ислам дініне ежелгі түркілер мен моңғолдардың көне наным-сенімдері үлкен ықпал етті, бұл – сопылық және тәңіршілдік деп аталатын наным болғаны баяндалды. Қожа Ахмет Ясауидың сопылық сенімдердің бірі болып табылатын «ясауийа» деп аталатын өзіндік ілімі мен жолы, діни ағымы Орталық Азия халқының діни қалыптасуында лайықты рөл атқарды.



Түйін сөздер: Орталық Азия, сопылық тариқат, тәңіршілдік нанымы, ислам дискурсы, өркениеттік құндылықтар.

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НЕКОТОРЫЕ ПРОБЛЕМЫ, КАСАЮЩИЕСЯ ИСТОРИИ ВОЗНИКНОВЕНИЯ СУФИЙСКОГО ОРДЕНА В ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ АЗИИ

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Аннотация. Введение. Известно, что научные исследования по истории возникновения суфизма на территории Центральной Азии ведутся уже давно, однако вопрос дискурса по этому направлению ислама остается актуальным и по сей день. Поэтому в статье рассматриваются новые подходы и результаты исследований, связанные с историей возникновения суфизма в Центральной Азии. Цель и задачи исследования. Анализируя труды отечественных и зарубежных исследователей, связанных с историей возникновения исламской религии в Центральной Азии, выявить распространения и духовных ценностей суфийского течения. Обсудить проблему дискурса, связанного с исламом, в современных исследованиях и выявить, как суфийский орден повлиял на духовную жизнь народов Центральной Азии. Материалы и методы. Сосредоточив внимание на фактической ценности религиозных произведений, историографический анализ истории суфийского ордена в Центральной Азии, использование метода дифференциации составляют методологическую основу исследовательской работы. Эти методы позволяют увидеть взаимосвязь божественных, исламских и суфийских проповедей в кочевых казахских степях. Анализируя средневековые религиозные произведения, мы можем понять уникальные религиозно-философские знания суфийского ордена из письменных научных трудов. Результаты. На основе исследований по проблеме ислама рассмотрены новые подходы к истории возникновения суфизма на территории Центральной Азии и результаты исследований. Обсуждались работы, посвященные культурнодуховным особенностям мистического течения ислама, формировавшегося и переживавшего процесс развития на протяжении десятков веков. Например, определены направленность, политикосоциальные и идеологические функции распространенной в казахской степи секты суфизма «ясавий» и скрытый протест против классического ислама. Заключение. Считалось, что древние верования древних тюрков и монголов оказали большое влияние на религию ислам, которая представляла собой веру в так называемый суфизм и божественность. Собственное учение и путь Ходжи Ахмета Ясави, религиозное течение под названием «Ясавийя», являющееся одной из суфийских религий, сыграло значительную роль в религиозном становлении народов Центральной Азии.



Ключевые слова: Центральная Азия, суфийский орден, вера в божественность, исламский дискурс, цивилизационные ценности.

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Introduction. Central Asia, situated at the intersection of East and West and at the core of the vibrant network of the Great Silk Road, has historically been a region of immense socio-economic, cultural, and spiritual importance, serving as a bridge connecting diverse peoples. Although the spread of Islam in the region did not entirely eradicate the ancient belief systems that had developed in Central Asia, it nonetheless introduced substantial transformations to the social fabric of the local populations. One of the most notable changes was the emergence of the Sufi order, a religious-philosophical system that blended elements of Tengriism and Islam, and which became deeply ingrained in the traditions of the Turkic peoples. Consequently, the teachings of key figures in Central Asian Sufism, such as Najm al-Din Kubra, Ahmed Yasawi, Baha-ud-Din Naqshband, and Abdul Khaliq al-Ghijduwani, continue to hold scholarly relevance and offer valuable insights for contemporary research.

During the early Middle Ages, as Islam began to expand across Central Asia, its influence on the socio-political structure of the local populations grew progressively significant. In the deliberate efforts to promote Islam among the nomadic communities of the Kazakh steppe, both Islamic scholars and Sufi missionaries played pivotal roles. Among these missionaries, Khoja Ahmed bin Ibrahim Muhammad bin Iftikhar Ahmed Yasawi (c. 1105–1166), a distinguished Sufi sheikh, emerged as a particularly influential figure. He is renowned for his substantial contribution to the spread of Islam among the Turkic-speaking nomadic peoples of Central Asia. Yasawi is credited as the founder of Muslim mysticism among the Turks and the Yasawiyya Sufi order. Furthermore, he is acknowledged as the first Sufi poet of the Turkic peoples, pioneering the development of a distinct genre of Turkic religious poetry known as *hikmat*, which enjoyed widespread popularity in Central Asia from the 15th to the 19th centuries. In addition, Yasawi's teachings had a lasting impact on subsequent Turkic mystical brotherhoods, such as the Naqshbandiyya, Kubrawiyya, and Bektashi orders, where he was revered as a major spiritual guide.

The significance of this article lies in the necessity to advance domestic historiography concerning the subject, to systematize the methodologies and approaches employed in the study of traditional Kazakh society within the framework of foreign historiography, and to contribute to the enhancement of social and humanitarian sciences. In this context, the examination of the formation and development of foreign historiography in Kazakhstan has gained increasing recognition. This process became fully feasible only after Kazakhstan and other Central Asian nations achieved state independence, thereby asserting themselves as sovereign actors in international relations. The focus of this study is a historiographical analysis of scholarly research on the emergence of Sufism in Central Asia. The study specifically examines the discourse surrounding the Sufi tariqa (order) within Islam, with an emphasis on analyzing the works of scholars in Islamic studies, Oriental studies, sociology, and history. These scholars have investigated the diffusion of Islam in Central Asia, particularly the establishment of Sufi orders in the region. Furthermore, this study seeks to explore the origins of the distinctive features of the so-called "Islamic revival" in this geographical area.

Materials and research methods. This study seeks to examine the continuity between the perspectives and conclusions of scholars in the fields of religious-literary studies and history regarding Sufism in Central Asia. By analyzing relevant works from this period, the research aims to identify the transformations in the integration of Muslim and Turkic worldviews, which, enriched with religious legends, evolved within the broader context of Islamic heritage. During the 10th and 11th centuries, religious-philosophical treatises emerged, laying the theoretical foundations for Sufism as a distinct philosophical and theological doctrine. Key figures of this period include Abu Talib Muhammad al-Makki, the author of *Qut al-Qulub* (Nourishment of the Hearts); Abu al-Qasim al-Qushayri, renowned for his influential treatise *Risalat al-Qushayriya* (The Qushayri Epistle); Abu al-Hasan Ali al-Jullabi al-Hujwiri, the author of *Kashf al-Mahjub* (Unveiling of the Hidden); Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, whose work *Ihya Ulum al-Din* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences) remains a cornerstone of Sufi thought; and the Andalusian mystic Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi (1164-1240), whose *Futuhat al-Makkiyya* (The Meccan Revelations) offers a comprehensive exposition of various aspects of Sufi philosophy. These sources collectively emphasize the



purity of Sufi thought and action, particularly the aspiration for inner purification of the heart (Muhammad Yusuf al-Khattar, 2005: 480).

The available data suggests that the Hanafi Sunni theological-legal school played a significant role in shaping the emergence and development of Sufi beliefs and practices in the region. One crucial aspect of the history of Sufism in Central Asia is the rise of Sufism within this particular context (Averianov, 2011: 648). Consequently, this article explores the conditions and key factors that facilitated the emergence of the Sufi order in Central Asia. Additionally, it identifies the social groups associated with the early Sufis (Bertels, 2002), providing insights into the factors contributing to the rise of Sufism. The influence of Sufi schools and movements from other regions of the Islamic world is also considered, as they may have played a role in shaping the evolution of Sufism in Central Asia (Orynbekov, 2013: 204).

In light of contemporary historiographical interpretations of pre-revolutionary Central Asia, it is crucial to emphasize the ideological and theoretical foundations of research on the process of Islamization, particularly the central concepts associated with it. When examining modern perspectives and research findings on the emergence of Sufism in Central Asia, comparative analysis is employed to explore historical patterns and phenomena. Special attention is given to historiographical studies that address these issues from diverse viewpoints. In this context, the article's methodological and theoretical framework adheres to widely accepted scientific principles for the study of historical processes and specific events, including historicism, scientific rigor, and objectivity.

Discussion. A significant body of historical, philosophical, and socio-political scholarship is devoted to the emergence of Sufism in Central Asia. Given the complex and multifaceted nature of Sufism as both a cultural and spiritual phenomenon, its study necessitates an interdisciplinary approach. It is crucial to underscore the general theoretical, historical, and philosophical works that examine the origins and dissemination of Sufism in the Central Asian region. Key contributions have been made by European scholars such as J.S. Trimingham, De Vina DiViz, E.E. Bertels, and A.J. Arberry, as well as Russian researchers including A. Krymsky, Yu.A. Averyanov, A.D. Knysh, O.F. Akimushkin, and S.N. Abashin. Scholars from other Muslim countries, such as Hazrat Inayat Khan, E. Karimov, Safar Abdullo Asgari, Dodbek Gulam, and Hussein Ibrahim Dinani, have also made notable contributions. Their work provides valuable insights into the development of Sufism.

In contemporary historiography, it is essential to emphasize the ideological, theoretical, and epistemological foundations of Western scholarship, which remain pertinent to the analysis of key issues concerning the spread of Islam in Central Asia. A critical examination of Western studies on the religious beliefs of Central Asian peoples and the Islamization process is closely aligned with the aims of the present research. Among the literature addressing this subject, numerous studies have been conducted that offer comprehensive information on the socio-economic, political, and cultural life of Turkestan, as well as the region's demographic and territorial characteristics.

One such study was published on the website of the "Balkan History Association" within a collection titled "Islamic Culture and Pre-Islamic Beliefs in Central Asia." This compilation underscores the importance of Islam in the religious practices of the Central Asian population and highlights the region's role as a nexus for diverse religions and cultures. The authors assert, "The introduction of Islam marked the beginning of an era of social and cultural transformations in the region. Several pre-Islamic sacred sites were incorporated into the Islamic cult of saints. The local populace assimilated elements of Tengrism and Arab mythology." This indicates that significant cultural and social shifts transpired in the region following the adoption of Islam.

Additionally, the collection draws attention to the role of certain "sacred sites," which evolved into central "places of worship," emphasizing their importance in the socio-spiritual fabric of Central Asian society. The authors concentrate on local interpretations of Islam, exploring their historical and cultural foundations.

Upon reviewing the works of European scholars regarding the spiritual dynamics in Central Asian nations, it becomes apparent that both medieval and contemporary European researchers share a common objective: advocating for missionary and socio-economic policies aimed at the peoples of Central Asia.

One of the scholars who conducted extensive research on the relationship between ancient beliefs and Islam during the Islamization process among the Turkic peoples in Turkestan is Devin DeWeese. His study, *The Tadhkira-i Bughra-khan and the 'Uvaysi' Sufis of Central Asia*, explores how the Islamization process in this historical context involved the assimilation of religious rules, practices, and social rituals, which facilitated the organization of communities and promoted their coexistence (DeWeese, 1996, p. 84).



The contributions of Central Asian scholars are crucial for understanding the history of Islam in the region. Their research addresses various dimensions, including the diffusion of Islam, the influence of Islamic legal principles on daily life, and the tenets of the Sufi worldview. Scholars such as B. Babajanov (Uzbekistan), A. Olimov (Tajikistan), A. Sultangaliyeva, and N. Nurtazina (Kazakhstan) have focused on the spread of Islam in Central Asia. At the international conference *Sufism in Iran and Central Asia*, the public figure and statesman Murat Auezov remarked, "If anyone in Kazakhstan today were to propose the idea of banning Sufism, they would have to erase an entire layer of our historical memory associated with such prominent figures as Yusuf Balasaguni, Mahmud Kashgari, and Ahmed Yasawi" (Sufism, 2007, p. 8).

Furthermore, Professor A.K. Muminov, in his work *The Library of Vikr Sufi Khwaja Muhammad Parsa in Bukhara*, highlights the significance of Muhammad Parsa (d. 1420), a disciple of Bahauddin Naqshband (1318–1389), for the study of Sufism and the Naqshbandi brotherhood, as well as the Hanafi theological-legal school. Muminov emphasizes that Muhammad Parsa's spiritual milieu was closely intertwined with the medieval regions of Iran and the Desht-i Qipchaq (Muminov, 2007, p. 163).

Results: Central Asia has a long and rich history of Sufism. The ancient cities of Central Asia, located alongside major centers of Islamic civilization such as Hejaz, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and Khorasan, gained prominence as Sufi hubs. For example, while ascetic schools of Medina, Basra, Kufa, and Khorasan emerged simultaneously in the 8th -9th centuries, an ascetic school was also established in Central Asia. Moreover, during the 9th -11th centuries, alongside the Sufi schools of Nishapur, Egypt, Damascus, and Baghdad, a Sufi school existed in Central Asia (Rakhimov, 2020: 5 - 17).

Of the twelve Sufi movements that formed and operated during the 9th - 11th centuries, two were particularly influential in Central Asia – hakimiyya and sayariyya. Additionally, four of the more than fifty Sufi orders (brotherhoods) that emerged worldwide – khwajagan-naqshbandiyya, kubraviya, qadiriyya, and yassawiya – originated in Central Asia. This clearly demonstrates that the region was one of the major centers of Sufi teachings.

According to A. Temirbayeva's research, Sufi Practices in Modern Kazakhstan: Traditions and Innovations, Sufism in Kazakhstan is deeply intertwined with the legacy and spiritual-educational contributions of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi (Hazret Sultan). Numerous scholars highlight his pivotal role in the dissemination of Islam among the populations residing to the north of the Syr Darya River. Khoja Ahmed Yasawi developed methods of Islamization that were sensitive to the cultural heritage, mentality, and distinct worldview of the Turkic peoples. The Islamization strategies he employed played a key role in the integration of unique elements into the national culture of the local Turkic-speaking populations, particularly influencing Kazakh culture and the ethno-confessional customs of the Kazakhs. The manifestations of Sufism in Kazakhstan are intricately linked to the region's historical, ethnocultural, and socio-political contexts. One of the most significant features of Sufism's resurgence in contemporary Kazakhstan is the increasing practice of pilgrimage to sacred sites. This tradition of pilgrimage is rooted in the veneration of saints, which is closely associated with ancestral reverence. Presently, the cult of saints, now recognized as the "veneration of saints," has become one of the most distinctive and visible aspects of Islam among the Kazakh population. This phenomenon has not only been revitalized but also gained substantial popularity among the general public. Prominent pilgrimage destinations include the mausoleums of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, Arystan Baba, and Ukasha Ata, as well as the mosques of Beket Ata, Shopan Ata, Karaman Ata, and the shrines of Yrgyzbay Ata, Bayanbay Ata, Domalak Ana, and Baidibek Ata (Temirbayeva, 2021).

B.G. Privratsky, a prominent researcher on Islamic issues in Central Asia, regards Sufism as an integral aspect of the cultural heritage of the Kazakh people. He asserts that, in the context of state-enforced atheism during the Soviet era, Sufism served as a distinctive cultural force that helped sustain and fortify Islam among the Kazakhs. According to Privratsky, "The esoteric and institutional manifestations of Sufism were lost, but its practical foundation remained largely preserved within the Kazakh mentality." He explains that this foundation is characterized by a dynamic interaction between ancestral veneration and the Sufi tradition of saintly veneration. This interaction is expressed through simple religious behaviors, rituals, and practices that occur in domestic settings, mausoleums, sacred sites, and healing ceremonies. The cultural significance and effectiveness of this dynamic, exemplified by the fusion of Sufism and ancestral worship, is underscored by its continued resilience and relevance within the collective memory of the Kazakh people. This is most clearly manifested in the widespread practice of pilgrimage (ziyarat) to sacred sites, which has become a crucial element of the Kazakh cultural consciousness, with Sufi spirituality forming a key component of this practice (Privratsky, 2001: 187).



M. Smagul, a theologian at the Center for Religious Studies, highlights that the primary vehicle for the introduction of Islam to Kazakhstan was the Silk Road, which facilitated enduring diplomatic and commercial exchanges. By the 6th and 7th centuries, a well-established trade route linking China to the West passed through Zhetysu and Southern Kazakhstan. This route played a dominant role in global economic relations from the 7th to the 16th centuries. The Kazakhs encountered devout Muslim merchants and pious Sufi traders, which greatly contributed to their acceptance of Islam. Furthermore, the Kazakh people, who already adhered to a belief in a singular deity, found common ground with the monotheistic teachings of Islam. The ancestors of the Kazakhs also placed high value on moral excellence, considering themselves spiritually refined individuals. Among the most notable figures in this context is Qorqyt Ata, regarded as a Sufi missionary. Manuscripts found in Germany and Italy offer insight into Qorqyt Ata's origins and background, indicating that he lived during the Abbasid Caliphate in the 9th century. One of his disciples, Sheikh Ahmed Yassawi, played a pivotal role in the development of Turkic Sufism, particularly through the dissemination of the Yassawiya tariqa (spiritual path) in Kazakhstan. The Kazakhs' adherence to the Yassawiya tariqa, founded by the Turkestan-based Sheikh Ahmed Yassawi, was marked by the practice of loud (public) dhikr. In contrast, the Naqshbandi tariqa, established by Sheikh Bahauddin Naqshband of Bukhara, promoted the practice of silent (internal) dhikr of the heart. This duality exemplifies the diverse spiritual traditions that have coexisted within Kazakh society (Smagul, 2021).

When examining scholarly works related to the Sufi tradition in Kazakhstan, they can be categorized into two distinct groups: those directly addressing the subject and those focusing on related themes. Noteworthy studies on Islam's historical presence in Kazakhstan include M.K. Abuseitova's *Kazakh Khanate* in the Second Half of the 16th Century, A.M. Nurgaliev's Essays on the History of Islam in Kazakhstan, N. Nurtazina's The Peoples of Turkestan: Problems of Islam, Integration, Modernization, and Decolonization (at the Turn of the 19th–20th Centuries), and The Struggle Against Islam: The Religious Policy of Soviet Power in Kazakhstan during the 1920s–1940s.

In contrast, studies more specifically focused on Sufism include A.K. Muminov's *Islamization and Sacred Genealogies in Central Asia: The Legacy of Ishaq Baba in Narrative and Genealogical Traditions*, E.A. Ongarov's *Kazakh Culture and Islamic Values*, and Z.Z. Zhandarbek's *Yassawi Path and Kazakh Society*, as well as *Nasab-nama*. These works by contemporary cultural historians examine Sufism as a key Muslim religious institution, its current state, and its historical development in Kazakhstan.

It is worth noting that comprehensive studies exist on the significance of religion in Turkic society, its influence on the structure of traditional statehood, and the consequences of religious diversity throughout the history of Turkic peoples. Recently, several works have been published on the political and cultural consequences of changing ideological directions in Turkic states. A distinguished historian, N. Nurtazina (2002:115), has extensively researched the spiritual and political transformations within Turkic society during the introduction of Islam. Her insights regarding the influence of Islam on the spiritual essence of Turkic peoples and its progressive civilizational significance within a spiritually and ideologically weakened Turkic society are particularly noteworthy.

Kazakh researchers have recently produced significant works on the ideological continuity achieved by accepting Islam and elevating it to the level of state ideology. One of the most notable works is D. Kenjetai's *Khoja Ahmed Yassawi's worldview* (Kenjetai, 2004: 45). In this study, the researcher analyzes the specific features of how Islam entered the nomadic Kazakh society through the "Yassawiya" doctrine. Another distinguished scholar, Z.Z. Zhandarbek, has made substantial contributions to this subject through his research on religious genealogical sources. His findings highlight the role of Khoja Ahmed Yassawi and the Sufi doctrine in the formation and development of medieval Turkic states and the Kazakh Khanate (Zhandarbek, 2000: 156). In his new study, *Yassawi path and Kazakh society* (Zhandarbek, 2006: 89), Zhandarbek extensively discusses the impact of religious discord on the fate of the Turkic peoples and the Kazakh nation. These studies thoroughly examine the nature of religion that developed within the Turkic-Kazakh society and the peculiarities of how the Turkic-Kazakhs embraced Islam.

According to Professor A.K. Muminov, an expert in oriental studies, four key factors influence the further development of Sufism in Kazakhstan:

1. The contrast between Sufism and fundamentalism:

This contradiction is evident not only in Kazakhstan but also in other regions of the Muslim world. The ideological conflict between the mystic and esoteric practices of Sufism and the rigid interpretations of fundamentalist movements continues to be a significant factor.

2. The politicization of Sufi groups:



Concerns arise from the increasing politicization of Sufi groups. Strengthening the organizational structure of Sufism could eventually turn it into a political force. For instance, the messianic direction of Ismatulla Maqsoum's activities is seen as a system that serves the interests of a single individual - the Ishan.

3. Rivalry among various Sufi orders:

Competition between different Sufi movements can be observed not only in ritual practices but also in ideological aspects. This rivalry can even manifest in ethnic forms. For example, some experts consider the village of Qushchi-Ata, where followers of the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidiya-Khusainiya order gather, as a center of Uzbek influence. In contrast, Ismatulla Maqsoum's followers strive to present their activities as a purely Kazakh phenomenon, while Qadiriyya remains a distinct Chechen phenomenon.

4. Sufism as spiritual heritage reflected in creativity, culture, and art:

Sufism is also perceived as a form of spiritual heritage that finds expression in literature, culture, and art (Muminov, 2007: 147).

We are currently witnessing the early stages of Sufism's establishment in Kazakhstan. The further development of Sufi groups is a matter for the future, which demonstrates a steady trend of activity. From a cultural perspective, Sufism has played a significant role in preserving various rituals and religious practices. It has effectively translated the five daily prayers from Zoroastrian traditions to Islamic dogma, incorporating indigenous elements into funeral practices. The pre-Islamic celebration of Nauryz, originally a ritual for honoring ancestors, gradually transformed into a component of popular Islam among Turkic and Iranian communities. Sufism, as a cultural mechanism, has actively contributed to maintaining various ceremonial and religious practices.

Furthermore, the Yasawi order emerged as a vital institution facilitating the integration of indigenous customs, beliefs, and traditions within Turkic societies. The order maintained strict adherence to the seventribe principle, and any tribe that deviated from this rule faced exile or isolation. Additionally, the influence of the Yasawi order is evident in the tradition of burying Khans in the mausoleum of Ahmed Yasawi in Turkestan, which continues to hold cultural and religious significance.

B.I. Abirova and Sh.S. Rysbekova, in their work Sufism in Central Asia, emphasize that Sufism within the Islamic world functions as a profound spiritual culture that serves as a complex mechanism for transmitting essential traditions, values, and ideological principles shaped by the dominant factors of Islamic culture, particularly the Arabic language and religion. According to the researchers, Sufism performs a dual function: on the one hand, it integrates new values into core cultural frameworks by transforming their external forms and altering the meanings of established models. On the other hand, Sufism acts as a missionary and reconciliatory force, addressing and resolving complex ideological and philosophical issues within Arab societies by offering comprehensive solutions that align with Islamic worldviews. Furthermore, Sufism plays a significant role in preserving ethnic memory. This cultural preservation function explains why Sufism gained widespread acceptance in regions transitioning to Islam and integrating into the broader Islamic cultural domain (Abirova & Rysbekova, 2012, pp. 11-15).

Philosopher M.S. Orynbeckov posits that Islam was not forcibly or artificially introduced to the territory of Kazakhstan. Rather, he argues that Sufism played a pivotal role in the dissemination of Islam by effectively aligning its principles with the traditional customs and social structures of the Kazakh people. This alignment allowed Sufism to serve as a missionary force, facilitating peaceful integration rather than the imposition of foreign beliefs (Orynbeckov, 2005, p. 240).

Orynbeckov further emphasizes that the Turkic people's intrinsic values such as a deep appreciation for life, a desire for freedom, optimism, and a profound connection to nature shaped their spiritual identity. This worldview, which often involved the personification of natural elements, was deeply rooted in the cultural memory of the nomadic societies of the Kazakh steppe. Despite the influence of major world religions, Orynbeckov contends that the resilience of this worldview endured. He argues that Sufism, to a considerable extent, preserved key aspects of shamanic practices. Specifically, the ecstatic states associated with Sufi rituals served as a medium for communication with the spiritual realm, echoing the shamanic practices that were infused with a sense of wonder and belief in supernatural forces. The synthesis of Tengrism and Sufism was so profound that, in some instances, shamans were regarded as equivalent to Muslim saints (Orynbeckov, 2005, p. 129).

Additionally, Orynbeckov contends that Sufism preserved traces of earlier mystical traditions and philosophical reflections related to notions of divinity, the cosmos, and the human experience. In his work *The Genesis of Religiosity in Kazakhstan*, he argues that Sufi teachings assimilated elements of Neoplatonism, notably the ideas of Proclus, in conjunction with pre-Islamic pagan beliefs and rituals. This



syncretism highlights the flexibility of Sufism and its ability to incorporate and adapt pre-existing cultural and spiritual frameworks into its doctrinal practices (Orynbeckov, 2005, pp. 118-122).

The emergence of Sufism can also be viewed as a response to the increasing formalism and rigidity of classical Islamic thought during its developmental stages. During this period, Islamic scholars focused primarily on refining doctrinal and ritualistic aspects of the religion, emphasizing extensive study of religious texts and enhancing the quantitative accumulation of knowledge. In reaction to this formalism, Sufism emerged as a spiritual movement emphasizing personal development and moral excellence. As a unique psychotechnical practice, it aimed to achieve a high level of spiritual and ethical growth through inward reflection and self-discipline. Sufism's emphasis on sincerity, asceticism, and simplicity reflected a conscious effort to attain authenticity in faith and devotion, prioritizing the inner transformation of the individual over external ritualistic practices.

A.K. Izbayrov, in his study *The History of Sufism in Kazakhstan*, underscores the importance of a thorough and meticulous examination of Sufism due to its intricate mystical-philosophical concepts, hierarchical structure that revolves around a central authority, and various attributes of its contemporary manifestations. Izbayrov asserts that the general religious awareness of many believers remains relatively limited, and that engaging with Sufism in the present day can be likened to navigating a double-edged sword. This issue is particularly pertinent within the context of Central Asia, where the emergence of new pseudo-Sufi orders has been observed.

In his work *Sufism as a Living Doctrine is Not Needed in Modern Kazakhstan*, N. Askar addresses the controversies surrounding Sufism, highlighting how certain factions have leveraged these disputes to consolidate their power in conflicts with both non-traditional movements and religious organizations independent of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan (SAMK). Askar contends that recent developments indicate SAMK's consistently negative stance toward Sufi communities, regardless of whether they are perceived as destructive or moderate. SAMK's position appears to align with orthodox Islam, which disapproves of Sufism, including the legacy of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, categorizing Sufism as heretical and a deviation from true faith (Askar, 2011).

In their study *Sufi Direction in Islam and Its Spread in Kazakhstan*, philosophers N.Zh. Baytenova and A. K. Duysenbayeva explore the dissemination of Sufism, a significant spiritual movement within Islam, across the Kazakh steppes. According to the authors, Sufism began to spread in the 9th and 10th centuries in regions of the Near and Middle East, as well as in North-West Africa. During the 12th to 15th centuries, various Sufi schools emerged and proliferated, including the Qadiriyya, Yasawiyya, Rifaiyya, Suhrawardiyya, Chishtiyya, Shadhiliyya, Mevleviyya, Badawiyya, Dasuqi, Naqshbandiyya, Khalwatiyya, Bayramiyya, and Bektashiyya orders.

With regard to the diffusion of Sufism within Kazakhstan, the researchers trace the origins of Sufi teachings among the Turkic peoples to the 12th through the 17th centuries. The cities of Turkestan and Bukhara played pivotal roles in the spread of Sufism among Turkic and Persian-speaking communities. Several Sufi orders gained prominence in Central Asia, including the Naqshbandiyya, founded by Baha al-Din Naqshband; the Qadiriyya, established by Abd al-Qadir Jilani; the Kubrawiyya, founded by Najm al-Din Kubra; and the Yasawiyya, based on the teachings of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi (Baytenova & Duysenbayeva, 2012: 102).

Khoja Ahmed Yasawi (1093–1166), regarded as the spiritual guide of Eastern Muslims and a distinguished figure in Islamic scholarship, is considered the primary source of Sufi history in Kazakhstan. His seminal work, *Diwani Hikmet*, composed in the Kipchak language, stands as a valuable intellectual legacy from this influential figure. The dissemination of Yasawi's teachings by his followers and disciples extended to various regions of the world. As a result, Sufi philosophy, through his influence, emerged as a significant and systematic spiritual framework that shaped the worldview of Turkic peoples (Baytenova & Duysenbayeva, 2012: 104).

In the scholarly examination of works pertaining to religious life in Central Asia, it is crucial to address the multifaceted nature of religion and religious practices, encompassing both its positive and negative dimensions, as well as its ideological, organizational, and practical manifestations. While the contributions of scholars exploring Islamic traditions are commendable, the origins and development of Sufi orders in Central Asia remain an area in need of a thorough historical and religious analysis. Nevertheless, the Sufi institutions in the Kazakh steppes played a pivotal role in the Islamization of local populations, significantly influencing the formation of a distinctive ethnic form of Islam. Consequently, Sufi



orders profoundly shaped Kazakh religious spirituality, fostering unique characteristics such as collective membership and the absence of hierarchical structures.

Conclusion. In conclusion, a thorough examination of contemporary perspectives and research on the emergence of the Sufi movement in Central Asia yields several key insights. A primary factor contributing to the formation of Sufi beliefs and practices in this region was the widespread adoption of Hanafi Sunni Islam, which ultimately became the dominant madhhab. The interaction of diverse religious and ideological movements in Central Asia played a pivotal role in shaping the development of Sufism. This ideological evolution transpired both as a response to competing ideologies, aimed at defending Islamic or Hanafi principles, and through a process of assimilation, where shared elements between opposing factions were incorporated. In its early stages, many Sufi figures in Central Asia were also scholars of Islam, including hadith experts, jurists, merchants, craftsmen, and ideologists from the ranks of the ghazis (warriors for faith).

Ultimately, scholarly research consistently affirms that Sufism is an integral component of the spiritual and cultural heritage of Central Asia, including Kazakhstan. The philosophical, sociological, oriental, religious, and historical aspects of Sufi traditions remain pertinent in contemporary contexts. As such, tracing the origins of the Sufi movement in Kazakhstan and Central Asia, as well as analyzing the contributions of its key figures, remains a crucial area for further scholarly inquiry.

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