

Sufism among Western Academics and Women: Analysis of Distributional Factors

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Abstract: This article examines and explores the phenomenon of Sufism among Western academics and women, as well as the factors that influence it. The background to this study is the increased attention to Sufism after the events of September 11, 2001, in which Sufism was considered an alternative to overcome psychological anxiety in modern life. The aim of this study was to analyze the factors influencing the distribution of Sufism among Western academics and women, as well as to understand the role of women in the spread of Sufism. The research method used is a literature study with a descriptive analysis approach. The main finding of the study is that Sufism is considered a tolerant school and can accommodate a variety of cultures, including in the context of Western culture. The role of women in the spread of Sufism is also very important, where Sufism becomes a means to prevent moral decay and seek spiritual tranquility in the midst of spiritual pressure.

Keywords: Feminists, Sufism, Women, Western Academics

A. Introduction

Social developments in Western European countries have resulted in an increase in the number of divorces, marital breakdown, sexual freedom, and violence in various forms. This has led some Europeans to find new ways to find peace and tranquility. They search for their identity and the essence of their existence. This is found in Islamic Sufism, which presents them with a new way that brings them to a higher level and spiritual awareness, which has become a solution to their material problems. They can understand the relationship between humans and the universe and between humans and their Creator. What factors accelerated the spread of Sufism apart from the factors mentioned above?

Sufi happiness cannot be achieved quickly and smoothly. However, it must rise and progress through a group of Sufi levels and paths by passing through many stations and conditions through a spiritual journey, either through a

knowledgeable sheik, a learned Qutub (teacher), or a spiritual journey. Experienced colleagues accompany them. Seekers must pass through three main stages: conversion, renunciation, and encounter. Each stage requires patience, perseverance, and great effort to gain God's pleasure and enjoy Divine encounters and revelations.¹ This is what followers of Sufism in Europe and the United States are looking for because they are facing boredom looking for a purpose in life amidst a frenetic environment.²

In this article, we studied literature such as the book *A Journey Through Ten Thousand Veils* by Maryam Kabeer Faye, who is of Jewish descent. Isa searched for a truth that would free him from various worldly determinations. He had observed and visited temples in Nepal and monasteries in Europe, but he received guidance to embrace Islam through Sufism. That is where he got a picture of women in Islam, unlike that depicted in the Western world, where women live in restraints and have no freedom at all.

We also studied the book entitled *Mystical Dimension of Islam*, which Anne Marie Schimmel wrote. This book illustrates Schimmel's sensitivity and understanding of Sufism in terms of epistemology, its development, and historical context, as well as his in-depth research into Sufism as reflected in Islamic poetry, drawing readers into the mood, vision, and way of life of the Sufis. Several articles in the *Sage Journal* also support these books entitled *Mysticism in the Courtroom in 19th-Century Europe*, which Andrea Gaus compiled. This article describes *Mysticism in the Catholic religion as a criminal offense that can be brought to court to try matters—supernatural things in Europe.*

Not only Western society in Europe is influenced by Sufism, but many Muslim immigrants are also carried away by Sufism because they are looking for role models to follow in the real world, not just limited to theories that have existed for a long time. Sufis in Europe carry out intensive daily activities in European society. Muslims in Europe have found the goal they have been looking for all this time, and their goal is in the activities of Sufis carried out in mosques and Islamic centers. They visited Islamic study centers and mosques that carried

¹ Markus Dressler, "Sufism in the West," *American Journal of Islam and Society* 24, no. 3 (July 1, 2007): 121–23, <https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v24i3.1533>.

² Murad Wilfried Hofmann, *Islam, the Alternative*, 2nd enlarg (Beltsville, Md: Amana, 1999).

out activities and taught Sufism and remembrance assemblies. Muslims who carry out these activities bring friends from various European ethnic groups. Some converted to Islam because they found spiritual peace away from material things, games, and violence that prevailed in their society. There are various Sufism orders in European countries, such as the Syadzililyah, Tijaniyah, Naqshabandi, and others.³ In the effort to spread Sufism in the Western world, what are the factors that make Sufism proliferate among non-Muslim communities, which is an obstacle to the teachings of Islamic Sufism?

B. Literature Review

The history of Sufism in Europe has experienced quite a long journey brought by French orientalist such as Eric Geoffrey, who later converted to Islam. He changed his name to Jonah Geoffrey. He continues to conduct research in the field of Sufism and teaches at the University of Luxembourg in northern France. The relationship between Western scholars and Sufism began in the 19th century with the Rose-Croix group, who called themselves European Sufis, clearly reflected in the poetry of the French poet Gerard de Nerval, who died in 1843.⁴ His friends and colleagues were very impressed with him. the work he produced. Gerard de Nerval was influenced by the Dervishes (Practitioners/dancers of Sufism) and the Sufis when he lived in Cairo and Istanbul, plus the presence of al-Amir Abdul Qadir al-Jazairi in France from 1847-1852 had a significant influence on culture. And science in France. This amazed priests and pastors, especially Catholic priests heavily influenced by Sufism.⁵

The spread of Sufism in France cannot be separated from the members of the Sufi order who came from Morocco and moved to France and settled there. They successfully gathered students in Sufism consisting of Muslims and French society

³ Lois A Stevenson et al., *Sabeanism*, ed. Robert Irwin, trans. Julia Alquezar et al., *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, al-Ṭab'ah, vol. 1, Fi Al-Fikr Al-Nahḍawī Al-Ḥisābī (Jakarta: Oxford University Press, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.35905/diktum.v19i1.1529>.

⁴ Mahdi Tourage, "Subjectivity in 'Aṭṭār: Persian Sufism, and European Mysticism, Claudia Yaghoobi, West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2017, ISBN 978-1-5575-3783-6 (Paperback), 202 Pp," *Iranian Studies* 51, no. 2 (March 2018): 317–20, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2017.1377008>.

⁵ "The Impact of Bektashi Penetration on the Ottoman Empire | Meirison | Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam," n.d.

itself. French orientalists were heavily influenced by Sufism culture, such as Louis Massignon Henri Corbin, who wrote books about Sufism and had another influence on the students and students who read them. It was not only Orientalists who influenced Sufism thought, but it also spread among Christian priests and bishops such as Louis Gardet, Lugieer, and Beaucucuel.⁶

Rene Guenon is considered a great teacher of Sufism; he named Sheikh Abdul Wahid Yahya as a pioneer of the Sufis who had a significant role in spreading Sufism in France. Rene Guenon is considered a great teacher of Sufism. He wore rough clothes made from sacks like Sufism experts who avoided worldly luxury. He practiced the Syadzililyah order in Paris in 1912. He was a famous Sufi in France at that time. He lived in Paris and wrote a lot about the Sufism. He corresponded with his friends, consisting of thinkers and scholars from various universities in France, regarding the nature of Sufism teachings and the goals of Sufism according to the Syadzililyah order. Most of the correspondence members practice the moderate teachings of the Syadzililyah order. Shaikh Abdul Wahid Yahya (Rene Guenon) greatly influenced the people of the Sufism sect in Europe even though he had left European cities and lived in Cairo in 1930 and lived there with a Zuhud life until he died in 1951. He had millions of followers in France, and his disciples continued the spiritual journey he had taken. His famous student, Abdullah Kudovic, translated Ibn Arabi's book Futuhat into French. Sheikh Abdul Wahid Yahya's influence reached Switzerland; the Sufi community there consisted of his students, the artist Frithjof Shoun, who died in 1998. He was a skilled writer and poet and spread Sufi thought among the intelligentsia in Switzerland and left behind several works about Sufism. One of his students was Michel Valsin, who died in 1974 and tended to the new style of Sufism inspired by Ibn Arabi. He had a significant role in disseminating Ibn Arabi's thoughts in a series of French cultural philosophies in Paris, and he named it Editions Traditionnelles. He spread it by publishing the introductory texts of Ibn Arabi's Sufism heritage.⁷

⁶ Andrea Graus, "Mysticism in the Courtroom in 19th-Century Europe," *History of the Human Sciences* 31, no. 3 (July 26, 2018): 21–40, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0952695118761499>.

⁷ Meirison Meirison and M Harir Muzakki, "Implementing The Spirit of Jihad in Sufism," *Jurnal THEOLOGIA* 31, no. 1 (November 6, 2020): 1, <https://doi.org/10.21580/teo.2020.31.1.5379>.

After that, French artists emerged who were productive in producing works of art that were influenced by the spiritual waves of the Sufis, especially in works of fine art that attracted great success, which was very popular and had never been achieved or achieved so far. Their works conjure up images of the Eastern world in a spiritual romance style. The most famous artists in this field are Etienne Denny and Ivan Agueli. He wore rough clothes made from sacks like Sufism experts who avoided worldly luxury. He practiced the Syadzililyah order in Paris in 1912.⁸ He was a famous Sufi in France at that time. He lived in Paris and wrote a lot about the Sufism. He corresponded with his friends, consisting of thinkers and scholars from various universities in France, regarding the nature of Sufism teachings and the goals of Sufism according to the Syadzililyah order. Most of the correspondence members practice the moderate teachings of the Syadzililyah order. Shaikh Abdul Wahid Yahya (Rene Guenon) greatly influenced the people of the Sufism sect in Europe even though he had left European cities and lived in Cairo in 1930 and lived there with a Zuhud life until he died in 1951. He had millions of followers in France, and his disciples continued the spiritual journey he had taken. His famous student, Abdullah Kudovic, translated Ibn Arabi's book *Futuhat* into French. Sheikh Abdul Wahid Yahya's influence reached Switzerland; the Sufi community there consisted of his students, the artist Frithjof Shoun, who died in 1998. He was a skilled writer and poet, spread Sufi thought among the intelligentsia in Switzerland, and left behind several works about Sufism. One of his students was Michel Valsin, who died in 1974 and tended to the new style of Sufism inspired by Ibn Arabi. He had a big role in disseminating Ibn Arabi's thoughts in a series of French cultural philosophies in Paris, and he named it Editions Traditionnelles. He spread it by publishing the primary texts of Ibn Arabi's Sufism heritage. After that, French artists emerged who were productive in producing works of art that were influenced by the spiritual waves of the Sufis, especially in works of fine art, which attracted great success and were very popular and had never been achieved or achieved so far. Their works conjure up images of the Eastern world in a spiritual romance style. The most famous artists in this field are Etienne Denny and Ivan Agueli.⁹

⁸ "التصوفُ والمرأة الغربية | طواسين للتصوف والاسلاميات" n.d.

⁹ Nasim Ahamed Mondal, Balhasan Ali, and Md Illias Kanchan Sk, "Has Muslim Got Benefited from the National Health Mission? A Situational Analysis of Maternal Health Services in India," ed. Muḥammad 'Ali al-Bannā, trans. Nicholas Mahdi Locket et al., *Ethiopian Journal of Health Sciences, Social,*

C. Method

In carrying out this writing, we carried out a literature study with a qualitative approach; we carried out an analysis and then described the findings from manuscripts, books, and journals about the history of the development of Sufism and its spread along with the obstacles and supporting factors for these teachings to continue in the world—various countries in Europe and the United States. Part of European society now tends towards Sufi Islam and the spiritual rituals carried out by thinkers. European culture continues to search for discoveries and research about nature and new beliefs that will fill their spirituality. This in their book is called preferred spiritual values. This is taught by the leaders of Sufi orders who live in European countries and call for tolerance, moderation, and recognition of the existence of other groups. They also invite a life of Zuhud, simplicity in loving material things and wealth, and making time to worship Allah S.W.T.¹⁰

This library research is taken from various sources like journal articles and books. We are using a descriptive analysis approach. We describe the results of the study of sources in the spread of Sufism teachings in Europe among intellectuals and women, along with their activities and the factors that accelerated the spread of Sufism teachings and the obstacles they faced. We explain and interpret the phenomenon of Sufism that occurred in Europe qualitatively and thoroughly by the sources studied.

D. Finding and Discussion

The association of many Westerners (Americans and Europeans) with Sufi orders is one of the direct and primary motivations behind many of them embracing the Islamic religion. There seems to be increasing interest in Sufism in the West as a psychological and spiritual behavior. "In general, Americans and Europeans find in Sufi orders openness, tolerance, flexibility, and support that responds to their individual needs and interests." "Islam was able to spread to new places in the world largely through Sufism, as Muslim Sufis demonstrated a

economic, and political studies of the {Middle} {East} and {Asia}, 30, no. 5 (September 1, 2020): 1, <https://doi.org/10.4314/ejhs.v30i5.19>.

¹⁰ Marcia K Hermansen and Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh, eds., *Sufism in Western Contexts*, Handbook of {Sufi} Studies (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2023).

flexible ability to adapt and integrate with those regions." Sufism also continued its journey westward through "travelers who visited the Middle and Near East in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and carried with them information about Dervish rituals, whether it was the Mevlevi Dervishes dance or the strange performances of the Rifaiyya Dervishes."

The phenomenon of Islamic Sufism being transmitted to Western countries and its embrace by many thinkers and intellectuals, especially on the female side, produced new issues and problems that demonstrated the extent of the fertility of Islamic thought in general and the extent of the richness of Sufism in particular and its ability to break into the most vital material civilizations and mark them with its spiritual character. The liberation of women in Western countries and their desire to demonstrate leadership and excellence are found in Sufism.

1. Islam is its Fertile Haven.

Now, the Alawiyah congregation is the most widespread congregation in France, which was founded by Shaykh al-Jazairi Ahmad al-Alawi (who died in 1934).¹¹ This congregation has several streams and sects, including the Islamic Friends Association which was founded by Shaykh Khalid Bentons (1949) and aims to introduce Sufi Islamic spirituality. Sheikh Bentons has a personality that is very well known among the French immigrant community who have joined the teachings of his order.¹² He founded a society called the Muslim Pioneers in France for his followers. His followers were enlightened on the importance of exercise in perfecting spiritual practice. Teaching media have used the internet to teach about the congregation's aims. His followers have increased, and he has held various seminars, meetings, and lectures in France and Switzerland to spread Sufi thought. In 2010, they held a large conference attended by three thousand followers of the congregation in the largest Palexpo hall in Geneva. In Italy, Sheikh Abdul Wahid Pallavicini is the most prominent Sufism expert and strongly

¹¹ Andrea Graus, "Mysticism in the Courtroom in 19th-Century {Europe}," *History of the Human Sciences* 31, no. 3 (July 2018): 21–40, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0952695118761499>.

¹² Maria Ulfa and Erva Dewi Arqomi Puspita, "Pursuing Happiness In Modern Era; Study On Hamka's Perspective," *Tasfiah* 4, no. 1 (February 1, 2020): 1, <https://doi.org/10.21111/tasfiah.v4i1.3960>.

influences young Italians and Muslim immigrants; most of his students are from the upper middle class and famous people in Italian society.¹³

2. The Influence of Sufism on Women in Europe

The phenomenon of Sufism not only influences men but also women in Europe. Women are also attracted to the Sufism. The interest of European women in Sufism goes back to the Middle Ages, as explained by Yves Le Breton, who visited Palestine in the 13th century AD. He wrote a book about meeting with a female Sufi expert in Akko. The woman sang a song of divine longing and love with beautiful poetry about the pioneer of female Sufism, Rabiah Al-Adawiyah.¹⁴

There is a modern myth about a European woman who adhered to Sufism in France, specifically in Lorraine, who married in 1872 to a Sufism sheik from the Tijani Order from South al-Jazair. This woman joined the Tijani Order after embracing Islam. Sufism became increasingly widespread among European women in the twentieth century. One of the Women's Sufism school's founders was Isabelle Eberhard, born in 1904. She was the daughter of the French poet Arthur Rimbaud, who emigrated from the words and life of Borjouis, the blood of French nobility flowing in his body.¹⁵ She embraced Islam after marrying Shaykh Sūfi al-Jazāiri, who adhered to the Rahmaniyyah order. This woman compiled many books in French about Sufism and Islamic Sufi Spirituality.¹⁶

A French nobleman named Valentine de Saint-Point was the daughter of the brother of the great French romantic pioneer poet Lamartine, who embraced Islam and joined the Syadziliyya congregation under the influence of Syaikh Abdul Wahid Yahya (Rene Guenon). Valiente de Saint Pont was very close to Shaykh Abdul Wahid. Yahya. Women adherents of Sufism are increasing in modern French society. They continue to try to distance themselves from the unfavorable behavior of most European societies, such as how they dress, promiscuity, drink,

¹³ "Misticismo Sufi: Buy Misticismo Sufi by Khan Hazrat Inayat at Low Price in India | Flipkart.Com," n.d.

¹⁴ Dra Silawati and M Pd, "Pemikiran Tasawuf Hamka Dalam Kehidupan Modern," *An-Nida'* 40, no. 2 (March 2016): 118–25, <https://doi.org/10.24014/AN-NIDA.V40I2.1502>.

¹⁵ Arin Salamah-Qudsi, "The Economics of Female Piety in Early Sufism," *Religions* 12, no. 9 (September 13, 2021): 760, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12090760>.

¹⁶ Dressler, "Sufism in the {West}."

and consume things Islam forbids. Most European women use Sufism to prevent the degradation of their morals, as happened in European society, which significantly degraded the status and dignity of women who were used as trading commodities. Every trade commodity must involve the bodies of very scantily clad women; the entity is not related to women in the slightest. However, women's bodies are still featured in any merchandise in the commercial media.¹⁷

Female Sufis have played an essential role in European society and provided a noble image of women with morals. Especially Muslim women in Europe who have embraced Islam and the Sufism. Even though Muslim women in Europe receive unfavorable treatment and prolonged humiliation and are continually marginalized in various areas of life, false images of Muslim women are always put forward by Western mass media, including members of their government, which is said to be democratic but does not provide cultural, behavioral and religious freedom at all when it comes to Islam.¹⁸ The mass media depicts women in Islam as victims of forced marriage and domestic violence. Women who adhere to the Sufism sect try hard to refute hype and false images about Muslim women. They efficiently provide enlightenment about the basics of Islam and are very tolerant, sincere, and honest. They have become an example for every woman in various fields of work, which has helped to straighten out the image of Islam in European society.

After September 11, 2001, Western attention to Sufis increased; they separated Islam and Sufi Islam. They held conferences and discussions in various countries in Europe. Themes that do not change from Sufism, Tariqah, and Sufism.¹⁹ Many Western intellectuals oppose Islam, but they support the Sufi movement. Mahyuddin Ibnu Arabi and the poetry of Jalaluddin Rumi compile the books widely circulated in the West. The extraordinary congress on religious freedom recommended adhering to Sufism, which was Zuhud and did not love the world turning away from political activities. This invitation is increasing because it strongly supports the colonialism carried out by the West in the Eastern world. According to their understanding, western politics now strongly supports

¹⁷ "Keberadaan Perempuan Dalam Industri Iklan - Nasional Katadata.Co.Id," n.d.

¹⁸ Nasim Ahamed Mondal, Balhasan Ali, and Md Illias Kanchan Sk, "Afghanistan."

¹⁹ Lena Larsen, "How Muftis Think: Islamic Legal Thought and Muslim Women in Western Europe," *How Muftis Think*, May 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004367852>.

Islamic Sufism to face the wave of radical Islam. Sufism was also used to combat Wahhabi thought and replace it with moderate Sufi thought. The waves of Sufism will carry the future of Islam.

They find that Sufi teachings are tolerant, moderate, flexible teachings that support the needs of their souls. Islam has spread to new locations worldwide through the Sufism order because Sufism experts adapted to the environment in which they preached Islam. The history of Islamic Sufism in the Western world has existed long before the West's discovery of the American continent. Annemarie Schimmel argues that Islamic Sufism in the Western world began in the Middle Ages. The work of an Islamic Sufism expert named Ramon Lull, who died in 1316 AD, has shown that the texts he compiled were identical to the results of Mahyuddin Ibn Arabi (1165-1240 AD). Ramon Lull had studied Arabic and Islam through a Muslim assistant with the motive of converting Muslims to Christianity.

Translation is a factor that also contributes to the spread of knowledge about Islamic Sufism in Western academia and society. An academic named "Fabricus from the University of Rostock in 1638 AD translated one of the poems of the Egyptian mystic Omar Ibn Al-Faridh (Died 1235 AD) for the first time" in Western literature. However, most information about Islamic Sufism is known to the West through classical Persian poetry, especially Saadi Shirazi's "Hadaek" or "Gulistan." This book has been one of the favorite books of European intellectuals since Adam Ulerius, who completed the first complete translation into German in 1651 AD, and his thoughts on Sufi poetry influenced many Anglo-Saxon orientalists.

"Hafez's poems are now the best sellers in the United States, and only the poetry of Jalal al-Din al-Rumi (1207-1273 AD) competes with them, which achieved great success in America, where the year 2006 AD was dedicated to Jalal al-Din al-Rumi, and under the slogan "A year with Rumi: daily reading"; As a group of American daily newspapers selects the poetry of Jalal al-Din al-Rumi in its pages every day and throughout the year.²⁰ He recognizes the influence of Moroccan Sufism on Spanish spiritualists, such as Saint (Jean de Lacroix) and Saint (Teresa Davila), through Jewish spiritualists. In contrast, some non-Muslim Western

²⁰ David Westerlund, *Sufism in Europe and North America* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004).

researchers have discovered that spiritual ritual practices (Ignace de Loyola) may have adopted Sufi indoctrination methods.²¹

Among the Western figures influenced by Islamic Sufism in this century, we find Englishman Reynolds Nicholson, American Samuel Lewis, Frenchman Rene Guenault, American Ralph Waldo Emerson, and many others. These people helped introduce the concept of Sufism to a broader audience through their writings, discussions, and other methods of influence. The American poet Emerson, for example, was influenced by the Persian Sufi poetry of the poet Saadi, and this influence was later reflected in Emerson's poetry and his articles. For the first time in English, Nicholson also gave Western readers a group of the most essential Sufi writings, particularly Jalal al-Din al-Rumi's *Masnawi*.²²

3. Sufism and Western Women

The goal of the ancient Sufi was to break through the barriers of time and history to reach the region of eternity and timelessness. As for Sufism from a more comprehensive and spacious perspective, it is the possession of awareness of an invisible and divine existence behind and through the tangible, material world. Because women's experience with themselves, society, and history has cycles and paths that differ from men's experience, women in their spiritual journeys may initially seek to unite with themselves, make reconciliation with the universe, and integrate with a society from which they have previously suffered separation, where they find for themselves a tolerant place that practices with them. Admissions.²³

Historians say that the first figure in the history of Sufism to be introduced into European literature was a feminist represented by "Rabi'ah al-Adawiya, the great Sufi woman of the eighth century, whose legend was brought to Europe at the end of the thirteenth century by Joinville, advisor to Louis XIV.". Western women are distinguished in the mystical field, both at the level of discourse and practice. Jane Smith discussed the relationship between Western women,

²¹ A J Arberry, *Sufism* (Routledge, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203706848>.

²² Stevenson et al., *Afghanistan*.

²³ 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Qudāh al-Hamadhānī, Mohammed Rustom, and 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Qudāh al-Hamadhānī, *The Essence of Reality: A Defense of Philosophical Sufism = Zubdat Al-Haqā'iq* (New York: New York University Press, 2022).

especially Americans, and Islamic Sufism. This is an attraction for some American women, which is true in Europe. They have found in it a reasonable alternative to Christianity, Judaism, or the agnostic environment" in which they were raised. Groups that tolerate restrictions, for example, the mixing of women and men during worship times, are desirable.

4. Western Women and Sufi Sheikhs

The leadership of Western feminists in the Sufism school in Europe and America is mainly due to the supremacy of feminist discourse, which goes beyond the level of demanding to hear women's voices screaming in the face of dominating masculinity to the level of participation side by side with men. Instead, it invades leadership positions in areas only preserved by men. One of them is Sufism, which does not pay attention to the gender of the practitioner or his external image as much as he cares about his spiritual and psychological dimensions, where the masculine and feminine can be equal. Although there are some differences in goals, for example: "In classical Sufism, 'fana' becomes the goal of a Sufi's difficult journey with his narrow self. Because women's experiences with themselves, society, and history have different circles and paths than men's experiences ».

A woman on her spiritual journey may initially want to unite with herself and be at peace with the universe. "While Sufis seek isolation and separation and even separate themselves from society for a time, women may wish to achieve the highest goal of their journey, to integrate with the society from which they have suffered from previous separation (*Khalwat*), in which they find themselves a tolerant place that practices acceptance with them and gives them space" for freedom. This goal can be achieved through nature experiments or intimate relationships between humans.

The urge to combine spiritual and social pursuits arises from the drive toward totality in women's teaching, but holistic thinking aspires to attain spiritual insight into social reality. Because women's spiritual experiences brought them a new sense of the power of their being, it is unlikely that women would consider the contemplative life praised by some religions to be the most appropriate expression of their new insights. This is because "the link between women's spiritual quests and their social quests is intuitively recognized by many women whose spiritual experiences have given them the energy and vision

capable of making changes in their lives and changing the position of women in culture and society."²⁴

Thus, "female sheikhdom" has become a purely Western phenomenon. This prompted a researcher to write a book about Sufi women in America, although she limited herself to discussing seven women of one method, namely the Naqshbandi-Haqqani way. Nevertheless, with this book, she drew attention to women's prominent presence in Sufism in the United States and the West. The history of his presence began from the beginning when he appointed "Hazrat Inayat Khan" around 1920 AD, a woman as his successor in the West, especially in North America. She was Rabia Martin, who in turn would appoint another woman, Effie Doss, to replace her in the affairs of the global Sufi organization Inayat Khan in 1948 AD. Sheikh Bawa Muhyiddin, in turn, came to the United States to become the center of his Sufi preaching at the request of one of his students, Zahra Simons, who currently leads a congregation in Philadelphia and is active in the women's movement.²⁵

As for the Jerrahi Helvetian method, it originated in Turkey and arrived in the United States in the late seventies of the last century through Sheikh Muzaffar Ozak of Istanbul, but after the death of the latter in 1985 AD, his method in America was divided into two branches: the branch known as Ashqi- Jerrahi. It is an active branch in New York, led by Sheikha Farha Fatima Al-Jerrahi (born 1947 AD). Another branch was involved in the Bay Area in San Francisco under the leadership of Robert Faragher, who was born in 1940 AD. "Sheikh Farha's biography shows that she was named sheik of the order by Sheikh Muzaffar Ozak just before he died in 1985 AD, and she was the first female spiritual leader in the order that emerged more than 300 years ago."²⁶

Among the most active women in the Sufi field in Europe and America, we find Camille Helminsky, a researcher of Sufism. Among his most outstanding books, we find: (*Women of Sufism: A Hidden Treasure*), meaning: "Women of

²⁴ Dominguez Díaz, *Women in Sufism*.

²⁵ Fait Muedini, "Sufism and Anti-Colonial Violent Resistance Movements: The Qadiriyya and Sanussi Orders in Algeria and Libya," *Open Theology* 1, no. 1 (January 3, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1515/oph-2015-0003>.

²⁶ Annemarie Schimmel, "Mystical Dimensions of Islam, 35th Anniv. Ed.: Thirty-Fifth Anniversary Edition," 2011, 544.

Sufism: The Hidden Treasure," in addition to his translations of many Mevlevi Method poems and his books. Camille Helminsky today leads one of the branches of this method in America, where she "runs the Threshold Foundation in California, a spiritual organization based on the Mawlawi teachings" of Sheikh Jalal al-Din al-Rumi. Sheikha Baji Tayaba Khanum leads a Sufi group in suburban Philadelphia, teaches the rituals of orders such as the Idrisi, Chishti, and Qadiriyyah, and has followers of both sexes.²⁷

Other women played a pioneering role in the field of Sufism in the West, for example, Sheikha Maryam Kabir Faye, a white American writer and active speaker on topics related to Islam and Sufism in the West, one of her most famous books: *A Journey Through Ten Thousand Veils: The Alchemy of Transformation the Sufi Way*, was born in Hollywood, California, to a liberal Jewish family. He said that:²⁸

"She was born in Hollywood to a Jewish family, became an actress at five, and has been acting for twenty years. When we were 12 years old, while working as an actress in a theater company in the San Fernando Valley, the assistant manager gave us a papyrus scroll, which he had made for us, and on it was written: Search and truth will set we and our goal free."

He continues the story of converting to Islam and finding his first spiritual guide, saying:

" She went to Berkeley in 1960 AD; from there, She went to India, Nepal, and various European countries. She went to Jerusalem and Hebron, and there, five minutes from the "Hebron Ibrahim" temple, She met her first Sufi mentor. She was a very great and holy person, and in the sanctity of that encounter, She converted to Islam more naturally and aesthetically."²⁹ Since then, Sheikha Maryam Kabir Faye has worked diligently to spread the Sufi teachings of Islam among Westerners in general, and she has also studied

²⁷ Dressler, "Sufism in the {West}."

²⁸ Annemarie Schimmel and Carl W. Ernst, "Mystical Dimensions of Islam: Thirty-Fifth Anniversary Edition," 2011, 320.

²⁹ Fitriyatul Hanifiyah, "The Essence of Mysticism in The Study of Tasawwuf," *AT-TURAS: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 8, no. 1 (June 30, 2021): 49–59, <https://doi.org/10.33650/at-turas.v8i1.2017>.

the Noble Qur'an and the Arabic language in America and other black African countries.³⁰

5. Sufi Feminist Issues Raised Between East and West

Among the issues and problems posed by the transition of any phenomenon from its cultural and social environment to another different cultural and social environment, we find the problem of clothing, veils, and make-up (decoration) among Sufi women. This problem falls into The larger context and is related to the Islamic community in Europe and America as a whole; as American researcher Jane Smith explains: "One of the most controversial issues among American and European Muslim communities is the issue of appropriate clothing for women to wear. It is clear that this topic is of great concern to many women in one way or another, and this interest increases in connection with the decisions they take from the prevailing discourse in the Western women's movement or what is associated with secular circles."³¹

According to Jane Smith, despite the intensity of this controversy and its diverse forms, there is agreement on two crucial points in this context: the self. The problem remains, of course, what is meant by this politeness? Second, choosing clothing is a woman's business and cannot, or should not, be forced by her father, husband, or other male relative. For Muslims in various parts of the world, especially Muslims in America, what is called "Islamic fashion" does not necessarily represent the same traditional clothing worn by women from other cultures."³²

6. Veil

The issue of the veil is an element of disagreement not only between Western Sufis belonging to different Sufi orders or between Sufi immigrants to the West from the Arab and Islamic worlds but is also included in the general and broad

³⁰ Dressler, "Sufism in the {West}."

³¹ Suhel Ahmad Fadel Hawamdeh, *الإسلام والمسلمين في كندا*, 1st ed., vol. 1, 1 (Beirut, 2016).

³² Hermansen and Zarrabi-Zadeh, *Sufism in Western Contexts*.

debate that exists between "the West" and "Islam." overall as can be seen in Researcher Marta Dominguez who believes that "wearing the hijab in Morocco, as in the Buddhist way – for example – also shows the mixing of economic, social and cultural elements with religion. In this context, the hijab can be seen as liberation or social justification or as an expression that embodies Islamic discourse with a political orientation.³³ From the strength of its legitimacy, researchers conclude the position of Buddhist adherents of Sufi orders in the West, representing a simple aspect that understands this difference. From independence, Sufis in England, for example, preferred to wear hats to cover their heads as a sign of respect for their Islamic identity.³⁴ As for Spain, there is a dichotomy and conflict between Moroccan bodhisattvas and Spanish converts who refuse to respond to Moroccan women's requests to wear the veil, claiming that this veil will bring blame to their friends and their environment. However, the dispute between the two groups has reached a point of tension, Which requires those responsible for roads in Morocco to order a separation between Moroccan immigrants and the group of Spanish converts.³⁵

Thus, it turns out that the hijab and how to wear it have become a determining element in the debate between Islam and the West, both in the Islamic world and Europe, where the hijab is used as a sign of religiosity and belonging to Islam in non-Islamic circles. At the same time, some Western mystics see the veil as a cultural symbol local in the world, and it is not related at all to religious prescriptions but to cultural traditions, as emphasized by researcher Marta Dominguez, saying: the veil with Moroccan culture made some European mystics not see the need to adopt this practice.³⁶ The roots of Sufism have long existed in the European continent, which played a significant role in spreading Sufism. In addition, Sufism on the continent is tolerant of Sufism teachings that do not differentiate between genders, whether male or female. The existing Sufism also does not distinguish between races and religions, and all can be united

³³ "Morocco: Hijab as a Choice · Global Voices," n.d.

³⁴ "Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil: Challenging Historical & Modern ... - Katherine Bullock - Google Books," accessed September 21, 2023

³⁵ Dominguez Diaz, 250.

³⁶ Marta Dominguez Diaz, *Women and {Sufism}: Female Religiosities in a Transnational Order*, Routledge {Sufi} Series (London ; New York: Routledge, 2015).

through the teachings of the Tarekat to achieve the same goal, namely gaining inner happiness and the outpouring of universal Divine guidance under the auspices of Islam.³⁷ Although Sufism is hampered by Muslim culture and habits, such as the veil and the wrong image of Muslim women who experience restrictions on their movement and marginalization, and the bad experience of Europeans regarding the criminalization of supernatural Catholic mystical teachings was brought to court for trial.

E. Conclusion

The phenomenon of the spread of Islamic Sufism teachings to Western countries has become a new problem that proves the breadth of Islamic intellectual wealth in general. Sufism has penetrated the most potent material civilization and has imbued it with a spiritual character. The West desires to dominate with excellence in leadership found in Sufism so that it runs by its mission and goals. However, this has become a medium for Islamic propagation in the West by providing support for Sufism and suppressing fundamentalist Islamic groups and Wahabi Jihadists. Modernization does not always bring happiness, so many intellectuals and feminists are looking for ways to find peace of mind, and they get new hope from Sufism with its various shades, which embraces all races, religions, and beliefs with excellent tolerance and moderation.

They found a reasonable alternative, especially for educated people and feminists, where previously, in Europe, supernatural and mystical teachings in the Catholic religion were considered crimes that had to be tried in concrete courts. Sufism was relatively successful in the negative image of Muslim women regarding the veil, which was also part of Western culture in the early modern era and was embraced by most other ethnic groups. Among the factors that accelerated the spread of Sufism's teachings were intellectualism, which was always curious, the existence of Islamic Sufism, which had existed for a long time in the Western world, societal and social conditions, and the exploitation of women. Another catalyst is the teachings of Sufism, which is very tolerant of differences in race, culture, and religion. []

³⁷ Dominguez Diaz, 255.

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