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The Dynamics and Role of Sufism in Turkish Politics and Society

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Abstract: Sufism is widespread in Turkey, and most Turkish people sympathise with the Sufis even if they do not adhere to particular Sufi orders. Sufism has been rooted in Turkish society throughout history and has experienced ups and downs. This article is a literature study that used a qualitative approach and descriptive analysis. Data were collected from documents, literature, and journals. This study found that Sufism was not entirely swept up by secularisation, particularly in rural areas. Even in urban areas, many still adhere to Islamic traditions, including Sufism, passed down from generation to generation. Furthermore, Sufism influenced the political world in Turkey and the period preceding the Ottoman Empire's collapse. Even after that, a new pattern of Sufism emerged, namely Sufism without order, which resulted from understanding the *Risale-i Nur*, written by Said Nursi.

Contribution: This article is expected to explain the role of Sufism in Turkey during the classical period as an agent of moderate Islam propagation who built a spirit of struggle. This study shows that Sufism in Turkey has different understandings from others that distance themselves from political matters, social activities, and state affairs.

Keywords: dynamics; Sufism; society; politics; Turkey

Introduction

Konya is the Turkish city that gathers the pillars of Islamic mysticism. Konya, located in the centre of southern Anatolia, is regarded as one of Turkey's most important spiritual centres of Sufism. Throughout Islamic history, the town that knew Islam at the hands of the Arab conquerors at the end of the Umayyad dynasty was closely associated with three great Sufis, which effectively and influentially contributed to the spread of mystical spirituality in various neighbouring Turkish cities later.¹ At the beginning of the seventh Century, A.H., fates wanted that city to embrace Muhyiddīn Ibn Arabī, Jalal al-Dīn al-Rūmī, and Shams al-Dīn Murcia Andalusia, whom his followers called the Great Sheikh. They travelled extensively in the countries of the Islamic East until they landed in Konya after experiencing the warm hospitality of the Seljuk sultans in Anatolia, where they allowed them to spread their ideas that had consistently met opposition in Egypt and the Levant. In Konya, Ibn Arabī rewrote his most famous book, the Meccan Conquests, and spread his ideas among a class of Turkish mystical-loving youth, including his noble disciple Sadr al-Dīn al-Qunawī. From the beginning of the Ottoman government, Tarekat and Sufism played a crucial role in many aspects and continued at the end of the Ottoman period and then disappeared on the political surface of the state government.² What is the key to identifying Sufism and politics in Turkey? And what made Turkey mystical fancy? And what happened to Sufism in Turkey after Ataturk deposed the Ottoman Caliphate nearly a century ago and replaced it with total secularism? When the Andalusian Sufi was preparing to return to the Levant, that quiet city witnessed the birth of another pole of Sufism, namely Jalal al-Dīn al-Rūmī.³

Jalal al-Dīn, known as Mawlana by the Sufis, was born in Balkh at the beginning of the seventh Century A.H. and moved with his father to several Islamic countries before settling in Konya. Jalal al-Din did not begin his intellectual life with Sufism. Instead, he was a well-known Hanafi jurist until he

¹ Muhammad Farid Bek Al-Muhami, *Tarij Al-Dawla Al-'Aliyya Al-'Utmaniyya* (Beirut: Dar al Nafa'is, 2009), 98.

² M Brett Wilson, 'The Twilight of Ottoman Sufism: Antiquity, Immorality, and Nation in Yakup Kadri Kadri Karaosmanoğlu's Nur Baba', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 49, no. 2 (20 May 2017): 233–53, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743817000034>.

³ Esmail Zare-Behtash, 'Images of "Love" and "Death" in the Poetry of Jaláluddin Rumi and John Donne', *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature* 6, no. 2 (4 January 2017): 97–105, <https://doi.org/10.7575/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.6n.2p.97>.

met the famous Sufi Shams al-Dīn al-Tabrīzī.⁴ The two of them collaborated on their renowned book titled *The Forty Rules of Love*, from which the Turkish writer, Elif Shafak, got the inspiration for her novel. However, Tabrizi left Konya mysteriously. His friend Rumi continued to write his famous Mathnawi book, the poems of which became chants and sung by Sufis over time and eras.⁵ Why did the Sufis and Sufism during the Ottoman Empire still survive in modern Turkey even though they had undergone secularisation? This writing aims to provide an overview of the uniqueness of the teachings of Sufism in Turkey, which is different from other Sufism teachings, which are timeless and eroded by the times, and the dynamics of power that sometimes support and pressure them to become extinct.

Literature Review

As supporting material in this article, we reviewed articles written by Asghari and Seyed Amir Hossein. The article is entitled "The Bektāshi Order, Sufism, and Shi'ism in the Work of Baba Rexheb, a Bektāshi Sufi of the 20th Century", published by *Turkish Journal of Shiite Studies*. This article discusses the Bektāshi Sufi order's role in building the Ottoman Turks' fighting spirit in jihad.⁶ It is a contradiction that Sufism should bring calm and away from worldly nature but instead gives new confidence to the elite Turkish army to carry out conquests in various regions in Europe and carry out developments in the administration of the occupied territories. Apart from that, we also have pretty complete references written by Muhammad Farid Beik, entitled "Daulah Iliyah Usmaniyah", which discusses the existence of the Ottoman Empire from various perspectives, including in the field of Sufism and the scholars who support Sufism which has taken root in lower society to the rulers. And his followers. Apart from that, there is an article written by Lipton, G.A. entitled "Secular Sufism: Neoliberalism, Ethnoracism, and the Reformation of the Muslim Other: Secular Sufism", published in *The Muslim World*. This article describes Sufis, who are tolerant and accept anyone who joins them from various backgrounds, religions, races, and nations. The discussion of this article focuses on the role of

⁴ Farida Maleki, *Jalal Al-Din Rumi (Divan-e Shams-e Tabrizi)* (Punjab: Radha Soami Satsang Beas, 2019).

⁵ Elif Shafak, *The Forty Rules of Love* (London: Viking, 2010).

⁶ SeyedAmirHossein Asghari, 'A Short Survey on the Common Doctrines Between the Bektashi Order and Shi'a Islam', January 2021, <https://doi.org/10.22541/au.161072800.02824298/v1>.

Sufis in politics and infrastructure development, which is not commonly practised by the sufi order in most Muslim countries. Most of the discussions in previous books and journals focused on the teachings of Sufism and society, which did not discuss the community's traditions in practising Sufism and the influence of Sufism on state politics.⁷

Method

This study uses historical analysis to understand the various themes based on their historical context. While a descriptive analysis is applied to sources that have been collected and verified based on various themes that are understood based on historical and political contexts that have developed from time to time, and analyse the influence of Sufism teachings that were spread in society that influence various government sectors.⁸

Sufism is an effort to train the soul with various activities that can free humans from the influence of worldly life and draw them closer to God so that the soul is clean and emits noble morals.⁹ Most Sufis and Tasawuf schools are apathetic towards earthly life because they focus on worship alone and do not interfere in worldly affairs, especially political matters.¹⁰

Results and Discussion

Bektāshi and Naqshābandī: The Most Famous Turkish Sufi Orders

If Anatolia embraced some Moroccan and Oriental Sufi symbols in the seventh Century A.H., it was not enough to explain the prevalence of Sufism among the masses of Turks in the form depicted in the following pages.¹¹ The spread of Sufi religiosity among the Turks can be attributed to the emergence of organised Sufi orders that found Anatolia an appropriate field and fertile ground

⁷ Lili Di Puppò and Jesko Schmoller, 'Here or Elsewhere: Sufism and Traditional Islam in Russia's Volga-Ural Region', *Contemporary Islam* 14, no. 2 (11 July 2020): 135–56, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-018-00434-3>.

⁸ Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, *The Kizilbash-Alevis in Ottoman Anatolia: Sufism, Politics and Community* (Scotland, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2021).

⁹ Sebastian Günther, ed., *Knowledge and Education in Classical Islam: Religious Learning between Continuity and Change*, vol. 172, Islamic History and Civilization, Studies and Texts (Boston: Brill, 2020).

¹⁰ M Amin Syukur and Abdul Muhaya, 'Economic Movements within Sufism in Java: A Case Study on Qadiriyyah and Naqsyabandiyah Sufi Orders', *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 9, no. 2 (16 December 2015): 229–56, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2015.9.2.229-256>.

¹¹ Alexandre Papas, ed., *Sufi Institutions*, vol. 154/1, Handbook of Sufi Studies (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2020).

for expansion. Despite the many Sufi charges associated with the Turks, two distinct orders can be identified: the Bektāshi Order and the Naqshābandi Order.¹²

The tomb of Sheikh Bahaa al-Din al-Naqshābandi was located in Bukhara, Uzbekistan. Bektāshi Order was founded by Haji Bektash Veli, born in Khorasan in 646 A.H. Bektash travelled to Anatolia in his youth, where many of his sheikhs advised him to migrate to the Seljuk sultans who welcomed Sufism. Although this method was in its infancy, it followed the Shiite line; however, the order leaders quickly changed this approach, turning it into a Sunni that corresponded to the ideas of the Turkic peoples, so they claimed and spread that they were Sunnis the sect. In his research "Sufism in Turkey: From History to Politics," Khaled Muhammad Abdo explained the reason for the spread of the Bektāshi Order among the Turks, with its esoteric character receptive to the sectarian and other religious groups, as this method was able to absorb and digest all the widespread mystical movements and ideas. A quote demonstrates this from Haj Baktash in his book *Wilayat Namah* (There should be no distinction between religions because discrimination leads to hatred among their people, while all religions strive to achieve peace and brotherhood among all humankind)¹³. The other Sufi order spread widely among the Turks is the Naqshābandi Order. This method is attributed to Muhammad Baha al-Din Naqshband, born in Bukhara, Central Asia, in the first half of the eighth Century A.H. and died in 791 A.H. He was known as the Naqshābandī because the name of God was imprinted on his heart due to his frequent remembrance of the Blessed and Exalted or because the Holy Prophet placed his hand on the heart of Muhammad Bahaa al-Din. It became an inscription on his heart. In contrast to the Bektāshi Order, the Naqshābandī initially had no connection with Shi'ism and derived its spiritual and religious legacy from Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, the order's first founder. The researcher Badia Abdel Aal mentioned in her book "The Naqshābandī: Its Origin and Development among the Turks" that the spread of the Naqshābandī Order among the Turkmen was due to the simplicity of its

¹² Butrus Abu-Manneh, 'IV. The Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi and the Bektashi Orders in 1826', in *Studies on Islam and the Ottoman Empire in the 19th Century (1826 - 1876)* (Gorgias Press, 2011), 59–72, <https://doi.org/10.31826/9781463229931-005>.

¹³ Ahmet Yükleyen, 'Sufism and Islamic Groups in Contemporary Turkey', in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, ed. Reşat Kasaba (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 381–87, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521620963.015>.

beliefs, their distance from complexity, their tendency to tolerance, and their encouragement of societal integration.¹⁴

Nursia Education and Media Networks

"Nursiya" represents the other side of the Sufi groups in Turkey. It is attributed to Sheikh "Badiuzzaman Saeed Nursi," where the Sufi group affiliated with him was founded following the Sheikh's death in 1960. It was known as "Nursiya" or "The Light." It is now regarded as one of the Sufi groups with the most significant influence in Turkish society. They spread across the diverse countryside and cities outside the Turkish border.¹⁵ Its distinct political perspective distinguished Nursia from other groups, stemming from the perception of their Sheikh who had been involved in the campaign to confront the invasion of the coalition forces with the Unionists during the First World War before the Unionists turned against him later, prompting him to retire from political affairs.

Society and Politics: How Has Sufism Influenced Turkish History?

The pattern of Sufi religiosity has been prevalent in Turkic countries from the beginning of the entrance of Islam into the country until the present, evident in the fields of society and politics. There are many phenomena associated with Sufi spiritual thought in Turkish culture, such as mosques containing shrines and tombs, one of Sufism's distinctive features.¹⁶ Sufi traditions have also influenced some art forms, such as the Tanoura dance, which is based on the repetition of circular movements inspired by the Mawvil view of the universe that considers the universe circular, making the dance's starting point and ending point the same. Sufi ideas also affected the development of some urban buildings, such as the Takaya, which began as the headquarters of Sufi sheikhs and then developed to play an important social role after receiving the poor and needy to feed shelter and assist them. Sufism also played essential roles in some pivotal moments in Turkish political history, making it challenging to study Turkey's political history without considering the influence of Sufi forces. Dr. Badia Abdel-Aal

¹⁴ Ahmād Ibrāhīm Beik and Wāsil Ala'-ad-Dīn Ahmad Ibrāhīm, *Kitāb Al Shariah Al-Islamiyah Al-Ahwal as-Sāhsīya Al-Ahliya Wa-Awāriduha: Wa Ahkām at-Tasarruf 'an-Al-Gair Al-Wilāya* (Al-Wisāya, 2015).

¹⁵ Yükleyn, 'Sufism and Islamic Groups in Contemporary Turkey'.

¹⁶ Beik and Ibrāhīm, *Kitāb Al Shariah Al-Islamiyah Al-Ahwal as-Sāhsīya Al-Ahliya Wa-Awāriduha: Wa Ahkām at-Tasarruf 'an-Al-Gair Al-Wilāya*.

emphasised the overlap between Sufism and politics in Turkey in the previously mentioned book, stating that the Turkish sultans used to seek advice from Sufi sheikhs and request extensions from them. The Ottoman Sultan would only have started a war or conquered a country by consulting the Sufi sheikhs. Many historical sources have attempted to demonstrate the influence of some Sufis in making some important political decisions, including the news that a meeting took place between Haji Bektaş Veli and the Ottoman Sultan Orhan and that the former urged the latter to establish a military force that would enable him to unify the Turkish country under his leadership, which was responded by establishing the Janissary Army.¹⁷

The researcher Khaled Muhammad Abdo explains that these narrations have attempted to attribute to Haji Bektaş the task of establishing the Janissary army, which is historically impossible because the founder of the Bektāshi Order had died about a half-century before the Sultan Orhan reign.¹⁸ For Sufism and Socie, Dr. Derin says that Sufism in Turkey differs from it in many Arab countries, as it is solid and present firmly in political, social, and economic life. Despite the official ban on Sufism, politicians of all stripes and orientations acknowledge the sheikhs of these orders at critical moments. According to journalist Ibrahim Bouazbi, who resides in Turkey, the power of the sheikhs of the Sufi orders is evident during the elections, as politicians come to sympathise with them in the hope of obtaining the votes of their followers, noting that the followers of the Naqshābandī Order in Istanbul exceed one million people.¹⁹

In exchange for votes, politicians and candidates make promises to the roads by granting them several facilities, such as allowing them to set up a school or endowment. The activity of the Sufis in Turkish society appears in the services they provide, where they establish hospitals and mosques, provide financial aid to the poor, and provide daily meals to students and the needy. Dr Derin says that the role of the Turkish endowment does not stop at giving aid to the Palestinian people and Muslims in Africa, as well as those affected by the earthquake in Indonesia or the victims of the Israeli aggression on Lebanon last

¹⁷ Karakaya-Stump, *The Kizilbash-Alevis in Ottoman Anatolia: Sufism, Politics and Community*.

¹⁸ Abdurrahman Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316819326>.

¹⁹ Yūsuf Qaraḍāwī and Qaraḍāwī Yūsuf, *Al-Siyāṣah Al-Shar'īyah Fī Ḍaw' Nuṣūṣ Al-Sharī'ah Wa-Maqāṣidihā*, Al-Ṭab'ah, Naḥwa Waḥdah Fikrīyah Lil-'āmilīn Lil-Islām (al-Qāhirah: Maktabat Wahbah, 1998).

summer.²⁰ Dr. Derin pointed out that some Sufi orders also did trading and established companies to secure financial requirements.²¹

Sufism and Turkish Politics

The Sufis played an essential role during the conquest of Constantinople. Muhammad Farid Bey, a lawyer, mentioned in his book *History of the Ottoman Attic State* that Sultan Muhammad al-Fateh decided to lift the siege on Constantinople and withdraw his forces. Still, Sheikh Shams al-Din, a Naqshābandī Sufi figure, refused and encouraged him to continue fighting until the conquest was complete. Finally, the Muslims took control of the impregnable city.²² Turkey's relationship between mysticism and politics reached its climax in the sixteenth century A.D. It became customary for a group of Bektāshi sheikhs to reside in the Janissary army barracks, where they taught the soldiers the Qur'an and other religious teachings. In addition to the Bektāshi and Janissaries, the leaders of the Sufi orders were led by the army commanders when they began their political interventions, so they removed some sultans and installed others. Dr. Badia Abdel Aal argued in her book "The Esoteric Thought in Anatolia" that this association continued until Sultan Mahmud II eradicated the Janissary army, abolished the Bektāshi movement, and closed its lodges and centres in 1826 A.D. Still, even after that, the Ottoman sultans maintained their respect and reverence for the Sufi sheikhs. There was no evidence of this from the letter that Sultan Abdul Hamid II sent after his dismissal to the Sheikh of the Shadhili Order, where the titles of glorification and flattery that Abdul Hamid bestowed on the Sheikh appeared. The Sufis' high position at the time was mentioned in his letter. Despite the overthrow of the Ottoman Caliphate by Kemal Ataturk in the 1920s, Sufism has retained its place in the political arena in Turkey. Bediuzzaman Saeed Nursi played political and social roles in opposing the forces of secular Kemalism by disseminating *Risale-i Nur*, in which he emphasised the necessity of awakening Turkish society from its slumber and preserving its Islamic identity.

²⁰ Mehmet Korkmaz and Cemil Osmanoğlu, 'Küreselleşmenin Birey ve Toplum Hayatına Etkileri ve Din Eğitimi', *MANAS Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 8, no. 1 (2019): 951–67, <https://doi.org/10.33206/mjss.483914>.

²¹ Hacı Yılmaz, 'Bektāshism According to Ahmed Sirri Dede Baba Who Is the Last Postnishin of Cairo Bektashism Dervish Lodge', *Journal of Human Sciences* 14, no. 4 (27 October 2017): 3310–27, <https://doi.org/10.14687/jhs.v14i4.4691>.

²² Bruce Masters, *The Arabs of the Ottoman Empire, 1516–1918* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 91, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139521970>.

Sufism in Turkey and its Doctrinal and Political Role

Since the Ottoman era, Sufi orders and groups have played an important role in Turkish politics and society. They were descended from Sufism, which dates back to the third Century A.H. According to a study published by the Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies, it began as individual tendencies calling for asceticism and much worship as a method or a way to reach God Almighty; that is, access to knowledge and knowledge of it. According to a study on the spread of Salafism in a mystical society such as Turkey by Imad Kaddoura, the researcher and Director of the Editorial Department at the Arab Centre, the spread of Salafism in a mystical community such as Turkey indicates that Sufism is not considered a doctrine but rather a path that seeks to purify the soul, purifies the heart, and adhere to good morals, beginning with the third pillar of religion, which is a charity, as defined in the noble hadith: "To worship God as if you see Him, and if you do not see Him, then He sees you."²³

According to the study, among the essential religious scholars known as Sufism were Abū Hamīd al-Ghazālī, Al-Hallāj, Rābi'a al-Adawiyya, and Muhyiddīn ibn al-Arabī and Jalal al-Dīn al-Rūmī. These individual tendencies have manifested in various ways that spread throughout Muslim countries. They used multiple approaches and methods, some adhering to the Qur'an and the Sunnah and attempting to interpret them based on their knowledge. Some went to great lengths to adopt modernised rituals or customs, which Salafi preachers classify as heresies and deviations. In Turkey, the researcher added, Sufism can be traced back to Sheikh Muhammad Bahā al-Dīn Naqshābandī (1318 - 1389 A.D.), who was associated with the Naqshābandī Order, one of the world's largest Sufi. It has played an essential role in the spread of Islam throughout history. The Naqshābandī is based on spiritual guidance through the "Murid," receiving the legal sciences from the Sheikh or the "Guide." These guides form a continuous and extended chain that returns to the Prophet Muhammad; may God bless and grant him peace. This method extends back to the Hanafi school of thought, representing the people's opinion method and reason in understanding and interpreting the Qur'an and the Sunnah. This approach prevailed for centuries among Muslims because the Umayyads, the Abbasids, and the Ottomans accepted it. This study mentioned placing the Hanafis at the

²³ 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Muḥammad 'Abd al-Salām Mubārakfūrī and Muḥammad Sulaymān ibn Muḥammad Amīn, *Mar'āt Al-Mafūṭih Sharḥ Mishkāṭ Al-Maṣābīḥ*, al-Ṭab'ah (al-Riyāḍ: Madār al-Qabas lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī', 2017).

centre of state institutions and the judicial system, resulting in widespread acceptance.²⁴

The Naqshābandī, and then the Turks, also rely on theology and evidence represented by the "Maturidiyya", attributed to Abū Mansūr Muḥammad al-Māturidī, who grew up in Samarkand in the fourth Century A.H. (d. 332 AH). Māturidī's foundations and upbringing were based on the Hanafī school of jurisprudence and speech. Besides, the views of Abu Hanifa were also the sources from which the ideas of Māturidī branched off.²⁵

The study shows that the Maturidiyya called for the doctrine of the people of hadith and Sunnah with a modification that combines the Prophet's hadith and the use of proof based on rational and verbal explanations and evidence. It expands the circle of thinking and conclusion in arguing with its opponents to prove the facts of religion and Islamic belief. One of the most notable features distinguishing it from others is that it states that the source of receiving prophecies is the intellect and that knowledge is obligatory with the intelligence before the arrival of hearing. Al- Māturidī did not see it as a justification for imitation; instead, he criticised it and provided rational and legal evidence for its corruption and the necessity of consideration and inference. Maturidiyya expanded and spread since the eighth Century. A.H., due to the support of the Ottoman Caliphs, spread throughout the Ottoman Empire.²⁶

The Naqshābandī differs from other Sufi orders in that the chain of spiritual transmission in these paths can be traced back to the Prophet Muhammad. Conversely, the Naqshābandī is the only Sufi order whose spiritual information returns to Abu Bakr al-Siddīq. Hence, it is distinguished as a method that recognises and respects the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs and is far from the Shiite and Alawite sects. Sheikh Ahmad al-Sirhindī (1524 - 1624), the central figure in the development of the Naqshābandī Order, reinforced the commitment to the order in the context of confronting Safavid Shi'ism and worked to regulate "ijtihad" and constrained it to be "within the limits of the Qur'an and Sunnah."²⁷ He also worked to encourage positive mysticism to be involved in public life

²⁴ Baki Tezcan, 'Hanafism and the Turks in Al-Tarasusi's Gift for the Turks (1352) (MSR XV, 2011)', *Mamluk Studies Review* XV (2011): 67–86, <https://doi.org/10.6082/M11J97WM>.

²⁵ Kamal al-Din Nur al-Din Marjuni, *Al-'Aqidah Al-Islamiyah Wa-Al-Qadaya Al-Khilafiyah 'inda 'Ulama' Al-Kalam Dirasah Muqaranah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 2014).

²⁶ Marjuni.

²⁷ Al-Muhami, *Tarij Al-Dawla Al-'Aliyya Al-'Utmaniyya*, 371.

rather than being limited to the traditional ritual practices of Sufism that withdraw from public affairs.²⁸ Sheikh Khalid al-Baghdadi, a Kurd from northern Iraq who joined the Naqshābandī in 1809, revived and expanded on this thinking in the nineteenth Century. He developed the Khalidi branch of the order, also known as "the Naqshābandī-Khālidiyya," which emphasised Sarhindī's ideas and was known for its strict rejection of a foreign rule or non-Islamic ideas. He was influenced by the European colonial movement in the Islamic world, which spanned from Indonesia to the North Caucasus. He demanded applying Islamic law and making Islam a guiding principle for reform.²⁹

Sufism has always renounced politics, but it has remained shrouded in mystery in Turkey after the fifties of the last Century, particularly since the emergence of the star of Muhammad Zahid Kotku, the leader of the Iskender Pasha group. This group arose from Necmettin Erbakan, and later the Justice and Development Party and its current leader Erdogan, as well as Zahid Kotko's role in merging Sufism and politics, and what has resulted in the recent decades has led to the belief that Sufism has become the actual indirect ruler of Turkey.³⁰ This is an opinion based on available evidence, such as the arrival of the Justice Party to power and, before it, the Welfare Party, both of which have a background in General Islamic law but that in its entirety undermine the outcome of the current Turkish reality over the previous decades.³¹

This Turkish reality is linked to Western policies implemented over the last several decades. It was part of the "NATO" alliance led by America and had a fixed relationship with the Hebrew entity on all security and economic levels. This reality completely contradicts the nature of Sufism in its general framework and has done so throughout history. With foreign powers, Crusader or Mongolians, Western or Eastern, and despite their asceticism in politics, they

²⁸ Elber Ortayli, *The Ottoman Caliphate: Modernization and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Bustān al-Ma'rifah Library for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, 2007), 78, <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=7QretAEACAAJ>.

²⁹ Andrew Peacock and Annabel Teh Gallop, eds., *From Anatolia to Aceh: Ottomans, Turks, and Southeast Asia*, First edit, Proceedings of the British Academy (Oxford: British Academy, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.5871/bacad/9780197265819.001.0001>.

³⁰ Yelmi Eri Firdaus, Elfia Elfia, and Meirison Meirison, 'RISE AND FALL OF MAMLUK SULTANATE: The Struggle Against Mongols and Crusaders in Holy War', *Al-Adyan: Journal of Religious Studies* 1, no. 1 (6 August 2020): 14–28, <https://doi.org/10.15548/al-adyan.v1i1.1713>.

³¹ Yükleyen, 'Sufism and Islamic Groups in Contemporary Turkey'.

rushed against the coloniser, as was evident in the era of modern Western colonialism, which affected various Arab and Islamic countries, confirming that the active political class in Turkey is separate from the mystical core.³²

Sufism upholds decency and public morals in its social aspect. It is a conservatism that starkly contrasts the official Turkish reality, governed by laws that do not even exist in "Tel Aviv" or Washington regarding transgressing religious and social values, inconsistent with the axioms of Sufism and its extreme sensitivity against obscenity. Turkish Sufism, whether Naqshābandī, Qadri, Bektāshi, Umwliya, and Khaluti, has its roots in the Turkmen tribes and their permanent travel in an extremely simplification of life. This simplification reflects the reality of Sufism as asceticism of the world and a fascination with the divine self, reinforcing its elevation from politics and worldly affairs while remaining unaware of the world's interference. Afterwards, the comprehensiveness of the Islamic religion for all aspects of life, particularly in contemporary reality, has been overshadowed by a sharp deviation from the values of Islam that Sufism advocates.³³ Even a cursory examination of the Turkish scene before the elections reveals the nature of Sufi negativity. The ingenuity of the Turkish political class in investing in this negativity, including its people, is a momentum that harvests more than a million voters in Istanbul alone and the matter ³⁴. It also competed with Fethullah Gulen, accused of the 2016 coup.³⁵ The party circuit is contesting the attraction of Sufi votes in the elections in exchange for opening a mosque or a school, including the Gulen Party, which resides in Washington. ³⁶A party that exerts extensive control over unofficial religious and educational centres, sounding the last warning bell for Sufis to distance themselves from this conflict or to take the initiative on their own and make their way according to the purity of their idea without being

³² Karakaya-Stump, *The Kizilbash-Alevis in Ottoman Anatolia: Sufism, Politics and Community*, 37.

³³ Fait Muedini, 'Sufism and Anti-Colonial Violent Resistance Movements: The Qadiriyya and Sanussi Orders in Algeria and Libya', *Open Theology* 1, no. 1 (3 January 2015): 134–45, <https://doi.org/10.1515/opth-2015-0003>.

³⁴ Banu Senay, 'Artists, Antagonisms and the Ney in the Popularization of "Sufi Music" in Turkey', *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 18, no. 1 (2015): 52–69, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549414557805>.

³⁵ Sokhi Huda, 'Fethullah Gülen's Perspective on Sufism (Translated from Indonesian Slide)', Hizmet Talks, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.4557872>.

³⁶ Huda.

caught up in the current reality, including its dependence and blasphemy in politics and economics.³⁷

Turkish Society between Secularism and Sufism

The Republic of Turkey is one of the countries of the Islamic world. The proportion of Muslims constitutes approximately 97.8% of the Turkish population, with the majority adhering to the Sunni sect.³⁸ Despite the rich Islamic history of the Turks during the Ottoman Caliphate, the modern Turkish Republic founded by Kemal Atatürk almost severed the link between it and the Islamic history at the legislative and legal levels of the Turkish state, which adopted the secular approach as a system of government after its establishment in 1923.³⁹ Even with the Turkish state's official adherence to worldly values, Islam retained its strong presence among the Turkish people, leading to some Turkish politicians expressing their Islamic inclinations in the 1950s. They attempt to take advantage of the favoured position of Islam in presenting their plans for the Republic of Turkey's renaissance and solving its problems. However, most of Turkey's secular elite opposed these voices because they believed that secularism was a well-established principle on which the modern Turkish state was based and should not be violated.⁴⁰ As a form of government in Turkey, in the 1980s emerged a generation of Turkish politicians who openly challenged their country's ruling secular elite and called for restoring Islamic rule in Turkey.⁴¹

³⁷ Galina M Yemelianova and Egdūnas Račius, eds., *Muslims of Post-Communist Eurasia*, Routledge Studies in Religion (London ; New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2023).

³⁸ Vladimir A. Avatkov, 'Populism in the Foreign Policy of the Turkish Republic', *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-0660-2021-21-3-543-554>.

³⁹ Edward J. Erickson and Adam Hook, *Mustafa Kemal Atatürk: Leadership, Strategy, Conflict* (Oxford; Long Island City, NY: Osprey, 2013), 74.

⁴⁰ Hulya Ari, 'Corrigenda: Secular Risk Governance and the Turkish Military's Battle with Political Islam, 1980s–2000s', *Security Dialogue* 49, no. 3 (2018): 306–323, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010618809037>.

⁴¹ A. Gani, 'Urgency Education Morals of Sufism in Millennial Era', *Journal for the Education of Gifted Young Scientists* 7, no. 3 (16 September 2019): 547–61, <https://doi.org/10.17478/jegys.603574>.

Similarly, most Turks were influenced by the Sufi ideas that came to them from the Islamic East and West.⁴² The most important was founded in the city of Konya, located in southern Anatolia, where many centres of Sufism were established. In fact, Sufism is more than just wearing a robe and turban, performing dhikr, and reciting a rosary while leaving what God has forbidden. Instead, Sufism is a science and action. Many consider themselves Sufi even though they have not learned what God has urged them to learn from religious knowledge. This is how they become a saint. The Sufi is the one who has adhered to monotheism, fulfils his obligations, practices asceticism in this world, shows humility to God Almighty, and honestly demonstrates his need for God. He also exerts effort in obedience to God by performing the duties and increasing the number of supererogatory deeds. As the master of Sufism, Imam al-Junayd al-Baghdadī, may God be pleased with him, said: "We did not take Sufism with gossip, but we took it by hunger, staying up late, and leaving out familiar and desirable things." Sufism is used by some groups affiliated with it, with whom they have begun to invent matters contrary to the law, which has opened the door for Wahhabism (those who call themselves Salafi) by attacking the Sunnis and the group. As a result, the heart of Turkey is a mystical passion with a secular appearance.⁴³

Contrary to popular belief, Sufi activities and methods in Turkey had a direct relationship with the caliphate and the Ottoman state throughout its history. With Turkey's entry into the Atatürk era, Sufism faced the challenge of continuity and survival under the rule of a system that adopted strict secularism. The Naqshābandī is one of the most followed orders in Turkey. It was founded by Muhammad Bahā al-Din al-Naqshābandī, who died in Bukhara in 1389. It was introduced to Anatolia by one of his followers, Abdullāh al-Samawī, in the fifteenth Century, and many sectors of modern Turkish elites accepted it.⁴⁴ Naqshābandī is a medium where its sheikhs promote the presence of the order and spread it among university professors, state employees, middle-class technocrats, and self-employed people, in addition to circles of intellectuals,

⁴² Muedini, 'Sufism and Anti-Colonial Violent Resistance Movements: The Qadiriyya and Sanussi Orders in Algeria and Libya'.

⁴³ Seycedamirhossein Asghari, 'The Bektashi Order, Sufism, and Shi'ism in the Work of Baba Rexheb, a Bektashi Sufi of 20th Century', *Turkish Journal of Shiite Studies* 3, no. 1 (27 April 2021): 51–74, <https://doi.org/10.48203/siader.799560>.

⁴⁴ John Zaleski, 'Sufi Asceticism and the Sunna of the Prophet in Al-Junayd's Adab Al-Muftaqir Ilā Allāh', *Journal of Islamic Studies* 32, no. 1 (1 January 2021): 1–26, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/ctaa051>.

businessmen, and leaders of political parties. The central figure in the development of the Naqshābandī Order is Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindī (1524-1624), who reinforced the commitment to the order in the context of confronting the Safavid Shi'ism and worked to regulate "ijtihād" and constrained it to be within the limits of the Qur'an and Sunnah. He also encouraged positive mysticism in public life, as opposed to the traditional ritual practices of Sufism, which withdrew from public affairs.⁴⁵

Sufi Moderation in Religiosity

Acceptance of the other in the context of tolerance represents the purification of the heart and the sweetening of behaviour with the morals of the prophets. There is no injustice or aggression, but instead, forgiveness, righteousness, and benevolence, which produces a healthy social environment in response to the divine command as stated in the Qur'an:

O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah, the witness in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do (Al-Māidah: 8).

True Sufism has excellent potential in the battle against terrorism and extremism in defence of true religion and its actual image, and for the state as an entity that collects the hopes of its citizens and protects their security and future, as well as society, its civil peace, and its peaceful coexistence, as Sufism is a large and extended arena to attract youth aspiring to exert effort and energy for the sake of Islam. Serving his religion and country after realising the emptiness of terrorist and extremist organisations whose only concern is to seize power and rule in many Islamic countries. The moderation in the teachings of Sufism and the tolerant attitude shown by adherents of the teachings of Sufism has become the main factors in continuing this moderate Sufism teaching.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ibrahim Cifci, 'Testing Self-Congruity Theory in Bektashi Faith Destinations: The Roles of Memorable Tourism Experience and Destination Attachment', *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 28, no. 1 (26 January 2022): 3–19, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13567667211011758>.

⁴⁶ Meir Hatina, 'Where East Meets West: Sufism, Cultural Rapprochement, and Politics', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39, no. 3 (2 August 2007): 409b-409b, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743807070948>.

Facing Secularism

In addition to the political activity of the Sufi orders, groups emerged to confront the secularisation of society, including Al-Nour, which Bediuzzamān Saeed Nursi founded, the most famous of which was officially Fethullah Gulen in 1977, and the Sulaymaniyah group based by Suleiman Hilmi Tonahan, which appeared as a Sufi group in 1888. In 1959, it was formally established with an administrative structure. These groups aimed to develop educational institutions to serve the community and preserve Islamic values.⁴⁷ They also found parallel cultural centres to official institutions through charitable endowments. Therefore, since the beginning of their era with religion, the Turks have defended Sufism as an impenetrable fortress in which both religion and the country were protected from various attacks and other dangers, the first of which is secularism, in addition to contributing to the push of some of those who follow these paths to become among the most prominent political faces in modern Turkey. For example, Necmettin Erbakan was supported by his group's Sheikh to establish his party and backed by members of the Naqshābandī Order.⁴⁸

Conclusion

Sufism has been deeply rooted in Turkish society from the grassroots to the rulers. Sufism is difficult to eradicate with the presence of secularisation and changes in cultural structures that come from within and outside, especially globalisation. Islam developed in Turkey could not be separated from the role of the Sufis, who spread it through moderate Tasawwuf. If Sufism disappears, Turkey will lose its history. Organised Sufis supported by society have been able to sustain various schools of Sufism in Turkey.

Tasawwuf is often associated with activities around mosques and places of worship. However, Tasawwuf in Turkey is found doing social activities, such as in education, and hospitals, helping to relieve victims of natural disasters, and even being involved in politics. Even political elites in contemporary times in Turkey are also members of Sufi orders, such as Turgut Ozal, Najmuddin Erbakan, Rajab Tayyip Erdogan, and Fethullah Gulen. They are affiliated with

⁴⁷ Abdessamad Belhaj, 'Legal Knowledge by Application: Sufism as Islamic Legal Hermeneutics in the 10th/12th Centuries', *Studia Islamica* 108, no. 1 (2013): 82–107, <https://doi.org/10.1163/19585705-12341276>.

⁴⁸ G. A. Lipton, 'Secular Sufism: Neoliberalism, Ethnoracism, and the Reformation of the Muslim Other', *The Muslim World* 101, no. 3 (July 2011): 427–40, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.2011.01389.x>.

various Sufism schools such as Naqshābandī, Nursi, etc. The teaching of moderation in Sufism has been the primary support in the continuity of Sufism in Turkey and the Islamic world from time to time and changing situations. The moderate Sufism teachings described previously will continue to survive in society and have also coloured the world of Islamic politics.

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D. reviewed the article, gave an analysis, and formulated a methodology. M. wrote the initial draft, editing and data curation. A.R.R. made validation and found resources. Q.M. collected data.

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