

ABSTRACT
of the dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the speciality
8D02206 - Religious Studies
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"Sufism in modern Kazakhstan in the context of transformation and
syncretism"

General description. The dissertation is devoted to the study of Sufism in Kazakhstan, its traditions, revival, as well as the processes of transformation and syncretism of the doctrine at the present stage.

Research relevance. The Sufi tradition in Kazakhstan was negatively affected and largely destroyed by the repressive secularization of the Soviet period. After the independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the processes of rethinking the cultural and spiritual heritage, traditions and customs of the Kazakh people began. In the neighbouring countries: Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Russia: Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Siberia, Caucasus, the same processes took place. It is important to note that in recent decades there has been a global trend towards the revival of Sufism as a universal spirituality without reference to religion. In the Kazakh context, the renaissance of Sufism manifests itself with its own peculiarities. Thus, the study of Sufism as a traditional institution of the Kazakh people and its influence on Kazakh society and the spiritual atmosphere of society as a whole is relevant today.

Degree of study of the dissertation's theme. At present, research on Sufism is very extensive, but many problematic aspects still need to be studied and completed. In different historical periods, depending on the state system, Sufism flourished or acquired latent forms. Scholars from the United States, England, France and other countries are increasingly showing their scientific interest in various methods and practices of Sufism, historical reference points.

The following authors may be mentioned as local scientists-researchers of Sufism A.H. Kasymzhanov, Z. Zhandarbek, G.E. Esim, A.N. Nysanbaev, J.A. Altaev, T.H. Gabitov, N.G. Ayupov, D. Kenzhetaev, M.H. Abuseitova, A.P. Abuov, M.C. Orynbekov, K.K. Begalinova, A. Konyratbaev, S. Kondybay, K. Kari, G. Kambarbekova, A.K. Muminov, Y. Paltore, B. Abirova, G.Zh. Nurysheva, G.G. Solovieva, I.E. Ergaliev, K.U. Alzhanova, G. Nurtazina, G.T. Telebaev, M. Isakhan, K.H. Tajikova, Z.J. Nauryzbaeva, N.Zh. Baitenova, K. Zatov, Sh. Kerim, T. Kydyr, B.B. Meirbaev, A.A. Kuranbek, S.E. Nurmuratov, A.D. Kurmanalieva, A.A. Ryskieva, K. Kurmanbaev, K. Tyshkhan, A. Abdrasilkyzy, A. Sagikyzy, B.M. Satershinov, S. Seytakhmetova, K.M. Borbasova, U. Bigozhin, M. Sengirbay, M.N. Smagulov, Y. Bulanuly, O. Samet, T. Temirbaev, O.O. Tuyakbaev, M. Tolegen, S. Mollakanagatuly and others.

In general, the analysis of the degree of scientific development of the topic shows that nowadays researchers from local and regional narratives make attempts to cover global trends and complex studies.

The purpose of the research A comprehensive study of active Sufi groups in modern Kazakhstan in the context of transformation and syncretism of the doctrine.

To achieve purpose, the following **tasks** were set:

1. To study the ideological foundations and origins of Sufism in the context of the traditions of the Kazakh people.

2. To identify active Sufi groups in modern Kazakhstan;

3. To examine the interaction of Sufi groups with official Islam and the state.

4. Consideration of social portraits of modern Sufi leaders.

5. Identifying current discourses in Kazakhstani Sufi communities in the context of doctrinal transformation and syncretism.

6. To analyze current trends in the development and spread of Sufism in Kazakhstan.

7. To analyze the reasons and factors of involvement in Sufi associations.

8. To consider the pilgrimage practices of Kazakhstan's Sufis.

9. Analysis of the representation of Sufism in the Internet and mass media.

The object of the study is Sufism as a system of worldview orientations, as well as representatives of modern Kazakhstani Sufism.

The object of research Sufism as a system of ideological guidelines, as well as representatives of modern Sufis in Kazakhstan.

The subject of the study is the place and role of Sufism in Kazakh society, the revival of Sufi associations in independent Kazakhstan, the relationship of followers of Sufism with representatives of Islam and other religions, the processes of transformation and syncretism of teaching. Due to the fact that modern Sufism represents a wide range of understandings and narratives based on various religions, this study will examine Sufi groups based on Islam.

The research subject the place and role of Sufism in Kazakh society, the revival of Sufi associations in independent Kazakhstan, the relationship of followers of Sufism with representatives of Islam and other religions, the processes of transformation and syncretism of teachings. Due to the fact that modern Sufism represents a wide range of understandings and narratives based on various religions, this study will examine Sufi groups based on Islam.

The chronological framework of the research is determined according to the topic, purpose and objectives of this dissertation. The study covers the period from the moment of independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the present.

The theoretical and methodological basis of the research is founded on interdisciplinary, anthropological, phenomenological and historical approaches. Qualitative methods were used as methodological tools to achieve the goal and objectives. A research programme was developed which included two guides. The first was for Sufi leaders and followers, and the second was for representatives of local executive bodies authorized in the field of religion:

- 20 in-depth interviews with leaders of Sufi groups and their followers;
- Expert interviews with representatives of local executive bodies authorized in the field of religion.

During the interviews, respondents were also asked additional clarifying questions in order to better understand certain aspects of the activities of Sufi groups in the country:

- Observation of Sufi communities in Kazakhstan;
- Analysis of activities in the media space.

All approaches to the study are based on the observance of the principles of scientific knowledge, based on historicism, objectivity, systematic and logical presentation of material, establishment of cause-and-effect relationships, complex and innovative approach to research.

The scientific novelty of the research. For the first time, a comprehensive study of Sufism in Kazakhstan was carried out by interviewing stakeholders: leaders and followers of Sufi groups, representatives of authorized state bodies, experts. As a result, the theoretical data was supplemented with empirical material.

The thesis highlights the following contents of scientific novelty. The historical aspects of Sufism and Sufi institutions through the prism of the traditions of the Kazakh people are considered; the data on active Sufi groups in modern Kazakhstan are systematized on the basis of the materials of the field research; the directions of activity and key discourses of Sufis in the context of transformation and syncretism of the doctrine are revealed; to reveal the interaction of Sufi representatives with society, the state and foreign Sufi structures; to consider the social and economic aspects of Sufism; to discuss the social and economic aspects of Sufism and Sufi institutions.

Provisions for defence: Despite the numerous works describing the specificity of Sufism in social, cultural and philosophical terms, the modern forms of Sufism, as well as the forms of Sufism revival at the present stage, the transformation of Sufism in the course of the historical process and under the influence of modern realities and contexts are still insufficiently studied. In this regard, we have come to the following conclusions:

1. On the basis of the historical approach it is revealed that Sufism is an integral part of the cultural tradition of Kazakhstan. This fact correlates with the data obtained during fieldwork and the opinion of anthropologist B. Privratsky, who explained the religion of Kazakhs through the concept of "collective memory". Despite the years of militant atheism, colonial policy, repressive secularization, physical reprisals against religious activists, current processes of globalization, technological breakthroughs Sufism has managed to survive and continues in modern times.

2. It is revealed that the religious renaissance promoted interest in Sufi practices, which began to revive due to a new comprehension of its own historical roots and the activities of various preachers, sheikhs, ishans both domestic and foreign. Such revival of religious traditions correlated with the situation in the Central Asian region.

3. It has been established that there is no single social portrait of a Sufi group leader. The active chapters have distinctive features, articulate to the current rhetoric in society, supplement the teachings with different methods. Actively engaged in the development of social trends. Due to this, the traditional Sufi constants are

transformed under the demands of modern consumers of religious services, as a result of which new religious constructs are created, representing a syncretic phenomenon. At the same time, the actors of state-confessional relations mostly have an ambiguous attitude to such facts.

4. The fieldwork revealed that women are active actors in modern Sufi groups. They participate in the life activities of their community and in religious practice, while different Sufi groups have their own rules of behaviour and separation. Women's contribution and gender dynamics in Sufism currently remains an understudied topic.

5. Analyses of the respondents' answers indicate a wide range of reasons and factors for entering the Sufi path. Each narrative presents its own subjective choices. Analyses of pull and push factors indicate that in many ways the traditional tools of propagating the teachings are currently being used.

6. Field data indicates a wide range of destinations for Sufi adherents. Traditional pilgrimage practices have been transformed into popular tourist destinations with varying levels of comfort. Meetings with sheikhs take place in active holiday destinations and are positioned as a globally relevant "meeting with a successful personality". In addition, religious tourism, today, is becoming an attractive cluster for investment and government support.

7. Within the framework of field research and analysis of Sufism followers' activities in the Internet space it was revealed that popular social networks, messengers, video hosting platforms for communication and interaction are actively used. However, the Internet is not a key factor in spreading Sufi teachings, but serves to maintain and exchange information among users. At the same time, some Sufi groups are actively developing this direction by preparing content in specially equipped studios, presenting content in a convenient and accessible format. In addition, new forms of recitation of zikr are being created online, which are borrowed from foreign Sufi practices.

8. According to the results of the study, the opinions of A. Kasymzhanov, G. Yesim, Z. Zhandarbek, D. Kenzhetayev, K. Tyshkhan, A. Abdrasilkyzy, N. Nurtazina, K.K. Begalinova, A. Abirova, Z. Nauryzbayeva that Sufism has deep roots in Kazakhstan and is an integral part of the spiritual heritage of our country and the whole Turkic world are confirmed. The activity of religious preachers – sheikhs, ishans – laid the foundations of tolerance, peace and harmony under the dome of Islam in many countries. At the same time, there is no consensus among scholars about the activities of modern Sufi groups. For example, the Western scholar E.S. Lawrence criticises the modern Western Sufi groups associated with the names of Idris Shah, Inayat Khan, J. Nurbakhsh, G.I. Gurdjiev and others, calling them "non-classical Sufism", "pseudo-Sufism". There is an opinion of A.K. Izbaïrov that some Sufi groups of modern Kazakhstan can be defined as pseudo-Sufi. He associates them with unlawful actions and bringing the leaders to various kinds of responsibility, as well as with unconfirmed legitimate grounds of the Sufi tradition. In general, the terms "universalist Sufism", "unified Sufism", "modified Sufism", "partially Islamic Sufism", "quasi-Islamic communities", "pro-Sufi structures", etc. are also used in the scholarly literature in different contexts. Nevertheless, as this

dissertation research has shown, traditional Sufi schools based on hereditary continuity have survived in Kazakhstan, but they are not always involved in the media space and are little known to modern believers. At the same time, new Sufi groups have the resources to create an extensive network and disseminate the teachings through a wide range of modern means. The study revealed the validity of the statements of A.D. Knysh, A.A. Yarlykapov, M. Sedgwick and O.A. Yarosh that modern Sufi groups have the resources to create an extensive network and to popularize the teachings through a wide range of modern means. Yarosh that modern Sufism represents a wide range of associations where the consumer of religious services chooses a liked "product/ teaching/ practice/ group/ mentor" and in modern realities it is important to study the current narratives, identify common trends and regional contexts. It is important to note that Sufism, like traditional religions, is undergoing processes of transformation, but Sufis themselves perceive these as positive. Syncretism is not inherent in all Sufi associations, but is more characteristic of newly formed communities and correlates with contemporary global trends. In general, in recent years, in addition to historical factors, there has been a shift in the focus of state religious policy towards the fundamental study of the country's spiritual heritage through the organization of scientific projects, conferences and seminars related to Sufism, as well as the cultivation of a tolerant attitude in society.

Theoretical and practical significance of the research.

1. An integrated approach to the study of the research topic by considering stakeholder narratives;
2. Reducing the expression of negative attitudes towards people of other nationalities and faiths.
3. To spread the culture of harmony, national and religious tolerance.

In general, the materials of this dissertation research can be used in the study of the phenomenon, philosophy, culture, traditions of Sufism within the framework of religious studies, philosophy, cultural anthropology and other related socio-humanitarian disciplines. The results of the study can also be used in the development of special courses, lectures and practical classes in the fields of Religious Studies, Philosophy, Philosophy of Islam, Culturology, Cultural Anthropology, Sociology of Religion, Psychology of Religion, Sociology of Culture and others.

In addition, the provisions of the study can be used for further study of the problems of Muslim communities in order to ensure spiritual security and preservation of confessional diversity in Kazakhstan.

Approbation and approval of research work. The dissertation's main scientific results and conclusions are published in 11 scientific articles. 1 is published in a scientific publication in the Scopus database, 4 in journals listed and approved by the Higher Attestation Commission of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and 6 in collections of international scientific conferences. The results of the study were tested at the republican and international levels as part of the implementation of scientific projects on Sufism after the qualifying stages of review.

The structure of the dissertation work. The dissertation includes an introduction, three sections, nine chapters, a list of references and appendixes.