



The Influence of Sufi Traditions On The Spiritual Life Of The Karakalpaks

Mirjakhan Atamuratova*

Nukus State Pedagogical Institute, Nukus, Uzbekistan

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53697/iso.v4i2.1855>

*Correspondence: Mirjakhan Atamuratova
Email: pnr9323@mail.ru

Received: 02-10-2024

Accepted: 12-11-2024

Published: 02-12-2024



Copyright: © 2024 by the authors. Submitted for open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Abstract: The dissemination of Islam in the Khorezm and Aral Sea region is profoundly intertwined with the teachings of Sufism, which played a pivotal role in shaping the spiritual landscape of the area. Sufi missionaries emerged as the foremost proponents of Islam among the Turkic nomadic peoples, utilising their mystical and inclusive approach to attract a diverse following. This article aims to explore the principal characteristics of Sufism's spread and its subsequent development within the social and spiritual lives of the Karakalpaks. The legacy of Sufism in the Khorezm and Aral Sea region is evident in the ongoing spiritual practices and cultural expressions of the Karakalpaks. Today, elements of Sufi thought continue to influence their rituals, art, and literature, reflecting the enduring impact of Sufism on their social and spiritual life.

Keywords: Karakalpak's , Islam, Sufi, Spirituality, Culture, Eshans, Folklore, Epics, Khizr, "Chilton".

Introduction

Sufism occupies an important place in the spiritual life of the Muslim peoples of the East. This doctrine has attracted the attention of Islamic scholars, historians, and philosophers (Khasanov, 2022). There is a lot of literature on the history and philosophy of Sufism. Most of these works are generalizing studies on the history of Sufism, the analysis of spiritual and educational practices of Sufi orders (Erincin, 2021; Fattah, 2022; Malik, 2023; Rone, 2023).

Sufism is a doctrine in the Islamic religion that leads a person to spiritual and moral perfection and appeared in the middle of the 8th century and the beginning of the 9th century [1.223]. Sufism soon spread to all Muslim countries and united various Sufi teachings of Islam. Among the ideological sources of Sufism, one can find elements of Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, and Buddhism [2.64]. Without denying such non-Islamic influences, it can be considered a product of the spiritual evolution of Islam (Hamdani, 2021; Mostofa, 2021; Wain, 2021).

A comprehensive study of Sufism allows for a complete understanding of the social, spiritual, and cultural life of the peoples of Central Asia during the Middle Ages. In recent years, the study of Sufism among the Karakalpaks has been considered the most important

scientific task. The spread of Sufism in Karakalpakstan is an unexplored topic. The introduction of Sufism into the social and spiritual life of the Karakalpaks, its development, and its influence on their socio-cultural life have not been studied from a philosophical perspective. These studies have not yet been conducted by anyone, which necessitates conducting scientific research in this area.

Methodology

Philosopher R. Shodiev focused on the historical aspects of the spread of Sufism in Central Asia, while Kh. Pulatov and M. Mamatov investigated the historical and philosophical foundations of Sufism, its ontological and religious-Islamic roots, formation, and development. Scientific research on the role of Islam in the social and cultural life of the Karakalpaks in the 18th and 20th centuries was conducted by the scholar M. Karlibaev. A. Idrisov, in his book "History of the Karakum Ishons," provides information about the madrasah of the Karakum Ishon Mosque, which was the main center of Sufism among the Karakalpaks, and about the Ishons. However, the introduction of Sufism into the socio-spiritual life of the Karakalpaks, its development, and its influence on their socio-cultural life have not been studied from a philosophical perspective. These studies have not yet been conducted by anyone, which necessitates scientific research in this area. The paper employed scientific research methods such as logic, historicity, systematicity, comparison, and interconnectedness.

Result and Discussion

The Karakalpaks are one of the ancient Turkic peoples who lived in the regions between the Aral Sea and the Caspian Sea, in the lower reaches of the ancient rivers Oxus and Jaxart, on the land of Turan.

It is difficult to answer the question: when did Islam and Sufism spread among the Karakalpaks? This was a long process, and the tribes and clans of the Karakalpak people, who lived in different places, converted to Islam at different times. According to research by S.P. Tolstov and T.A. Zhdanko, the Kangli tribe of the Karakalpaks lived in the lower reaches of the Amu Darya River from ancient times and converted to Islam in the 12th-13th centuries. By the 18th century, Islam had become the main religious faith in the Karakalpak region, and religious leaders emerged as a powerful force shaping the religious views of the population.

The spread of Islam in Khorezm and the Aral Sea region was inextricably linked to the teachings of Sufism. Among the Turkic nomadic peoples in these lands, the most active propagandists of Islam were Sufi missionaries. They incorporated various pre-Islamic beliefs and rituals into their way of life to help Islamization.

The teachings of Sufism, with their vitality, allowed for the widespread acceptance of Islam in the region. The beginning of the penetration and spread of Sufi views in the southern Aral Sea region is linked to the activities of Khwaja Ahmad Yasawi and his student Hakim Ata Suleiman Bakirgani. Starting in the 18th century, another Sufi sect, the Naqshbandi, began to penetrate Khorezm and the Aral Sea region. Muhammad Sharif eshan, Kurbannazar eshan, Yerali eshan and Muhammad Salih eshan, representatives of the

school of Caliph Niyazkuli in the naqshbandiya-mujaddidiya section of the Naqshbandi order, were among the first to bring this order to these lands [3.170].

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the Ishans were the main propagandists of Islam in Karakalpakstan, they had a strong influence on the population and enjoyed great privileges. Because the spread of Islam among the Karakalpaks was often carried out through Sufi clergy. The reason is that during this period, among the Karakalpaks, the authority of religious scholars (eshans) who graduated from madrasahs in Khiva and Bukhara was high. There were also large landowners among the Ishans. Each eshon had several murids, called Sufis. Sufis devoted their lives to the eshans, renouncing the pleasures of the world and living in the hope of entering paradise "in another world." Sufis served the eshan until the end of his life. They considered the Ishans their peers. Every Thursday evening they paid a visit to their eshans, always bringing gifts to the priest: money, rams, goats, cows, etc. On Friday night, the eshon spent the whole night reciting a sermon to his Sufi about how to serve God, which, in turn, the Sufi transmitted it to the people. So, the Sufis were those who spread the teachings and instructions they received from the Eshon to the people. Among the Karakalpaks, as among the Turcomans, the title of eshan was inherited [4.152].

Along with the eshans, the Karakalpak religious scholars Khojas, Sheikhs, and Akhuns, who considered themselves descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, also enjoyed great privileges. The Akhuns were literate people who had graduated from a madrasa in Khiva or Bukhara, and they taught religious education in old schools. All the Karakalpak religious scholars belonged to the Naqshbandi order. Examples include Jantemir eshan, Imam eshan, Karakum eshan, Aimuhammad eshan, Abdisattor eshan, and other scholars of the 18th-19th centuries. Karakalpak scholars, who studied in the madrasahs of Bukhara, Khiva, Iran, and the Middle East and received deep knowledge, built their own schools and madrasahs based on Muslim knowledge.

The Sufi tradition, originating within the Islamic religion, had a significant impact on the thinking and way of life of the Karakalpaks. After the Arab conquest, religious schools began to appear, and later madrasahs began to provide in-depth knowledge. In schools, "Haftiyak" and "Chor Kitab," which are considered one-seventh parts of the Holy Quran, were taught. In the second stage, the works of Sufis such as Sufi Allahyar, Alisher Navoi, Fizuli, and Hafiz were studied.

The madrasahs studied Arabic grammar, Islamic jurisprudence, works related to Sharia, and works of religious and secular content.

One of the centers of Sufism among the Karakalpaks in the 19th century was the Karakum Eshan Madrasah. Karakum Eshon was considered a representative of the Naqshbandi order, he was a follower of such great representatives of Sufism in Central Asia as Abdukhalk Gijduvani, Bahauddin Naqshband, and Khoja Akhrar Vali. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the Karakum Eshan mosque-madrasah served as the religious and spiritual center of the Karakalpaks. Here, not only the children of the Karakalpak people, but also the children of the Kazakh, Uzbek, and Turkmen nations received education and studied the teachings of Sufism.

With the advent of Islam, books that spread among the Karakalpaks were primarily books of religious content written in Arabic. On this subject, philologist Kh. Khamidov writes: "Among the books in Arabic that are widespread among the Karakalpaks, there is mainly literature of religious content. The second group consists of books of a scientific nature, while the third group consists of literature of artistic content. They mainly contained the Holy Quran and its tafsirs, books on Islamic law written in Arabic, and works on theology. Among the Karakalpaks, the works of well-known representatives of Sufism, Imam al-Ghazali Nasafi, on the science of kalam - Islamic theology, and hadiths collected by Imam Bukhari, Imam Tirmidhi, and Abu Lais Samarkandi are widespread. Among the great representatives of Sufism, Sufi Allayar's works "Murad al-Arifin" (The Purpose of the Arifs) and "Maslak al-Muttaqin" (The Purpose of the Faithful) were studied.

Karakalpak epics, fairy tales, songs, and legends are, first and foremost, invaluable sources on the history of spiritual culture. The struggle of heroes of Karakalpak heroic epics against infidels, the rituals performed by them, and other characters reflected real events, the lives and traditions of the population.

It cannot be denied that heroic characters in Karakalpak epics such as Alpamyş, Koblan, and Yedige may have been great personalities, performing roughly the same feats and actions. In the past, the medieval hero of the central character of epic works embodied the ideal of the "perfect man" of Sufism. The Islamic worldview and the spirit of Sufi morality are embedded in all famous works of the Karakalpak heroic epic. In Karakalpak epics and oral folk art, positive characters were defended by "chilton" ("gayb-yeren"). These supernatural forces penetrated the minds of the Karakalpaks under the influence of Sufism. According to the teachings of Sufism, this world is governed by the saints in an invisible way with the permission of Allah. These were saints who achieved the status of perfection and sanctity. With the saint's death, the entire hierarchy comes into action, its place is taken by the lamb and replaced by the saint. Sufi saints traveled around the world, believed to be able to perform miracles. "Abdal" is considered a group of saints, and in Persian, "chilton" refers to the legendary "forty souls," possessing supernatural powers according to religious beliefs. In his hikmah, Yassavi mentions "Chiltan," meaning "forty men." These "forty men" possess the power of holiness and act in God's command to solve worldly matters. The beds of the dead are filled with living people [6.203]. (The Chiltans were also called "disappearing yeren," which translates from Persian as "hidden friends").

In the Karakalpak epic "Alpamyş," it is said that the Karakalpaks sought help from "qirq chiltan":

Original formate:

"Uzoqda qoldi Baysun ellari
Qildan ham engichka bo'ldi bellarim
Yolg'iz edim, yordam bergil bizlarga
G'oyib yeren, Qirq chiltan pirlarim.
Sen ham yolg'iz qudoyim
Menda yolg'iz iloyim

Translate formate:

"The lands of Baisun are far away
My waist is even longer than hair
I was alone, help us
Goib yeren, Qirq chiltan pirlarim.
And you, my goddess
I'm the only one

Istanat ber biru bar
G'oyib yeren, Qirq chiltan" [7.213] .

Give me an example
Goib yeren, Qirq chiltan" [7.213].

When the Karakalpaks set out on their way, Gaib Yeren, worshipping the Forty Chiltans, asked him for help:

Original formate:

"G'oyib yeren, Qirq chiltan
G'aybona bo'lsin yuldoshing,
Alloh taolo yo'lingni o'nglab
Hamma pirlar qo'llasin
Aumin, Allahu akbar!" [8.532].

Translate formate:

"Goyib yeren, Qirq chiltan
May your companion be absent,
God will guide you
Let all the priests support
Aumin, Allah Akbar!" [8.532].

In Karakalpak folklore, particularly in epics, the image of the saint Khizr occupies a special place. The image of Khizr had a great influence on the spiritual culture, customs, traditions, and worldview of the Karakalpaks. For the Karakalpaks, Khizr became a symbol of divine grace, happiness, well-being, and wealth.

Sufis teach people to see Khizr for every person, therefore, "One of forty is Khizr," "If you see anyone, know Khizr, Every night, Know Qadr." In its essence, do not discriminate against a person, every person born into the world is a world, a Khizr in its own way. It is said that no matter how much you respect him, appreciate him, and take his heart, this is the same Kaaba. It is said that every night should be appreciated and enjoyed.

Khizr is also mentioned in Karakalpak tales, proverbs, and poems. The name Khizr is conventionally mentioned in the blessing. For example:

Original formate:

"Ko'cha ravon bo'lsin,
Hayotingiz farovon bo'lsin,
Yurganda yulingiz bo'lsin
Xizr ota yuldoshing bo'lsin
Omin, Allahu akbar!.
Yorilha Qudoyim qabul et
Xizr kelib, baxt qo'nib,
Nima tilasa bandasi
Shuning barin ato et" [9.533].

Translate formate:

"Let the street be smooth,
May your life be prosperous,
Be on your way
Let Xizr ota be your companion
Amen, Allah the Exalted!
Dear God, accept me
Happiness will come,
Wishlist
That's why give it to me" [9.533].

The influence of Sufi literature can be seen in the works of such great representatives of Karakalpak classical literature as Kunhodja, Ajiniyaz, and Berdakh. For example, in the songs of Kunhoja Ibrahim ogly (1799-1880), the work of the Turkmen poet Makhtumkuli, who came out of the Yassavi school of Sufism, had a great influence. The method of giving

advice, which is found in the works of Makhtumkuli and Kunkhoja, and calling all people to the path of righteousness, was first used in the wisdom of Yassavi.

The work of the poet-thinker of the Karakalpak people, Ajinyaz Kusibay ogly (1821-1878), was also influenced by Sufism. In his works, he prioritizes the idea of a perfect person, rich in pure conscience and faith. The level of a perfect person can only be achieved through loyal love, that is, only the pursuit of purity, honesty, and spiritual wealth leads a person to maturity. We see that his poems "Bir Janon," "Ey Nozillar," "Bir Pariy," "Gözallar" [10.113] and a number of others were written taking into account the main directions of Sufism, the artistic tradition of Sufi poetry. In these poems, divine love is singled out, not secular love.

There is a similarity to the wisdom of Khoja Ahmad Yasawi in the meaning of the lines of poetry in the works of the Karakalpak poet Berdak Gargaboy ogly (1827-1900). For example; In Berdoq's poem "I Seaked," he believes that God is the creator. Everything in the world was created by God, the earth, the whole world, the spaces. About this says the God who made the earth and the sky true! [11.220]. Berdoq, like some Sufi poets, abandons the world, that is, completely abandons the problems of this world and devotes himself entirely to the other world. While saying that the world is transient, he accepted Bahauddin Naqshbandi's principle of "let your heart be in Allah, and your hands in labor" as the main rule for himself.

Conclusion

The conclusion is that the teachings of Sufism, with their vitality, allowed for the widespread acceptance of Islam in the region. Therefore, Sufism contributed to the spread of the Islamic religion and its humanitarian ideas among our people. Sufism had a significant impact on the spiritual and moral well-being of people who believed in Islam. Sufism had a great influence on oral folk art, legends, epics, and the development of our artistic literature. Thus, folklore and oral folk art attest to the spread and development of the Islamic religion and Sufi traditions in the socio-cultural space of the Karakalpaks in the Middle Ages. We know from Karakalpak epics and folklore, epics and proverbs that the influence of Sufi traditions on the socio-spiritual life of the Karakalpak people is highly Islamized. All of them are based on Islamic and Sufi ethics. The traditions of Sufism, originating within the Islamic religion, had a significant impact on the thinking and way of life of the Karakalpaks.

References

- Ahmad Yasawi. (1992). *Devoni hikmat*. T.: "Gafur Gulyam Publishing and Printing Association. 203.
- Ajiniyaz. (1994). *Selected works*. N.: "Karakalpakstan.113.
- Berdaq. (1997) *Selected works*. N.: "Karakalpakstan. 220.
- Hamidi H. (1991). *Writing in Eastern Languages*. N.: "Knowledge. 26.
- Holmuminov Zh. (2021). *Comparative Sufism*. - Tashkent, 64.
- Idrisov A. *The History of Karakum Ishans*. Nukus: "Karakalpakstan." 2023.170 B.

- Kamalov S. (1968). Karakalpak's XVIII-XIX century. - T.: "Fan". 152.
- Karakalpak folklore. (2007). Vol. 1-8. N.: "Karakalpakstan." 533.
- Karakalpak folklore. (2007). Vol. 2. N.: "Karakalpakstan." 532.
- Karakalpak folklore. (2007). Vol. 3. N.: "Karakalpakstan." 213.
- Philosophy. Encyclopedic Dictionary (2010), T.: National Publishing House of Uzbekistan, 255.
- Erincin, S. (2021). Sufi Dance, Trance, and Psychophysical Performance: Transcultural Elements in Jerzy Grotowski's Theater. *Dance Chronicle*, 44(3), 207–222. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01472526.2021.1982330>
- Fattah, A. A. (2022). The unique twin approaches of Sufi Sheikhs and host-guest relationships at El Sayed Ahmed El-Badawy Mosque in Egypt. *Quality and Quantity*, 56(4), 2723–2750. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-021-01242-3>
- Hamdani, H. S. (2021). The syncretic traditions of islamic religious architecture of kashmir (early 14th -18th century). *The Syncretic Traditions of Islamic Religious Architecture of Kashmir (Early 14th –18th Century)*, 1–216. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003096528>
- Khasanov, N. (2022). The End of the 19th and the Beginning of the 20th Century an Overview Turkistanian Religious and Enlightenment Literature (Saryami, Muhayyir, Hazini Example). *Turk Kulturu ve Haci Bektas Veli - Arastirma Dergisi*, 101, 187–209. <https://doi.org/10.34189/hbv.101.006>
- Malik, Z. U. (2023). Role of Sufis and Bhaktas in North-Western: India during the Eighteenth Century. *Sufism in Punjab: Mystics, Literature and Shrines*, 158–178. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781032668741-9>
- Mostofa, S. M. (2021). The Islamization of Bangladesh. *Critical Studies of the Asia-Pacific*, 37–74. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-79171-1_2
- Rone, M. (2023). The Role of Sufi Leaders in Contemporary Afghanistanian Politics from the Perspective of Political Sociology. *Central Eurasia Studies*, 15(2), 199–222. <https://doi.org/10.22059/jcep.2023.338372.450054>
- Wain, A. (2021). The Kubrawī and early Javanese Islam: Re-assessing the significance of a 16th-century Kubrawī silsila in the Sejarah Banten Ranté-Ranté. *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 49(143), 42–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2021.1875658>

