

The Sufi Movement and Its Impact on the Scientific Movement in the Islamic Maghreb

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Abstract:

Religious life experienced significant development and diversification during the era of the unifying Prophethood. As a result, certain customs were reinforced while others gradually vanished into oblivion. The asceticism and piety exemplified by the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions bore fruit and spread throughout all regions. Indeed, Sufism emerged in the Prophet's ﷺ lifetime; in its early phase it manifested primarily as ascetic practice in the Islamic West, dating back to the first Islamic conquests of that region. Only later was it defined with a precise conceptual framework. Initially, the movement appeared in the Islamic East—specifically in Kufa—and then spread to the Islamic West via four main conduits through which ideas reached the Maghreb: ḥajj (pilgrimage), seeking knowledge, manuscripts and treatises, and commercial trade.

The influence of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazzālī (450–505 AH/1058–1111 CE) on local society became particularly pronounced. His Sunni-Ash‘arī experience is believed to have reached the Maghreb through Abū Bakr ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 543 AH/1148 CE), who is said to have internalized al-Ghazzālī’s thought and even received the khirqā (spiritual cloak) directly from him. From that point onward, the phenomenon of Sufism flourished across the region, securing a distinguished place in its cultural and religious history. This milieu produced scholars whose contributions left indelible marks on Islamic history. Nonetheless, researchers and Orientalists have disagreed on the precise factors that facilitated the emergence of Sufism in the Islamic West.

Keywords: Sufism, asceticism, scientific movement, Islamic Maghreb, journey.

1.Introduction:

From the earliest phases of the Islamic conquests, the Islamic West became increasingly integrated into networks of scholarly and cultural exchange that connected it with the Islamic East, despite the geographical distance separating the two regions. The tradition of scholarly travel (*riḥla fī ṭalab al-‘ilm*), along with the movement of scholars and the transmission of books, played a decisive role in the formation of a shared intellectual space that facilitated the circulation of ideas and methodologies across diverse scientific and religious disciplines. Within this context, Sufism emerged as one of the religious and intellectual components that achieved wide diffusion throughout the Islamic East, the Maghreb, and al-Andalus. Nevertheless, the nature of this presence and its historical function remain issues that require careful conceptual clarification and critical analysis.

A number of scholars in the Islamic West were influenced by eastern Sufi experiences, whether through direct contact with Sufi masters or through their incorporation into spiritual and pedagogical networks. Among the most prominent figures in this regard was Abū Madyan al-Ishbīlī (d. 594 AH / 1197 CE), who functioned as a major spiritual and educational authority within the Maghribi milieu. Such influence, however, should not be automatically construed as evidence of a structural or systemic impact of Sufism on the scientific movement. Many of these scholars combined spiritual discipline with active engagement in teaching, jurisprudence, and the sciences, operating within pre-existing institutional frameworks rather than through a specifically Sufi epistemic model.

Several scholars explicitly embraced what is commonly described as *Sunni Sufism*, which they understood as being grounded in adherence to the Qur’ān and the Prophetic Sunnah, and emphasized its ethical and pedagogical dimensions. In this perspective, Sufism was conceived primarily as a practice of spiritual refinement and social conduct, rather than as an alternative epistemological project to the rational or transmitted sciences. This conception contributed to the social acceptance of Sufism and facilitated its diffusion across various social strata, including certain circles of political

authority. Methodologically, however, such social diffusion does not in itself suffice to establish a direct causal relationship between Sufism and the flourishing of scientific activity.

Indeed, the scientific movement in the Islamic Maghreb and al-Andalus developed through a complex interaction of multiple factors, including educational institutions, the expansion of scholarly writing, political patronage, legal and administrative needs, and the reception of eastern intellectual influences. Reducing this multifaceted process to a single explanatory factor—such as Sufism—constitutes a reductionist approach that fails to account for the complexity of the historical reality.

Accordingly, this study seeks to critically reassess the relationship between Sufism and the scientific movement in the Islamic West. Rather than presupposing influence, it aims to examine the conditions, modalities, and limits of such influence, if it existed at all. The central research question may thus be formulated as follows:

To what extent can Sufism be said to have contributed to the flourishing of the scientific movement in the Islamic West, and what was the nature of this contribution, if any?

This primary question gives rise to several subsidiary inquiries:

- Did Sufism function as a supportive framework for the scientific movement, or did it largely remain a parallel ethical and spiritual phenomenon?
- Did Sufi orders, ascetic practices, or Sufi scholars play a direct institutional role in the production of scientific knowledge?
- Or were scholarly sources, educational institutions, intellectual infrastructures, and political and economic factors the principal drivers of scientific development, with Sufism operating primarily as a general cultural element?

2.Sufism

2.1Definition of Sufism:

Ibn Khaldun (d. 808 AH/1405 AD) defined Sufism as devotion to worship, detaching oneself from worldly distractions, and focusing solely on God. It involves refraining from pleasures, wealth, and status, and withdrawing from society for the sake of worship. This practice was prevalent among the companions of the Prophet (PBUH) and the righteous ancestors¹.

2.1.1 Definition of the Path (Tariqa):

In the book "Zuhur al-Haqa'iq fi Bayan al-Lata'if," it is mentioned that the path is the prescribed practices and obligations given by God, which leave no room for exemptions. This path is exclusive to those who are journeying toward God, progressing through spiritual stages and purification.²

2.1.2 Definition of Asceticism (Zuhd):

Asceticism is the view of the world as transient and fleeting, reducing its value in one's eyes, which makes it easier to turn away from it. It is also described as the soul's renunciation of worldly attachments without artificial effort.³

2.1.3 The Emergence of Sufism:

It is said that Sufism first appeared in Basra, which is considered its original place, as stated by Ibn Taymiyyah: "The first appearance of Sufism was in Basra." However, al-Jawzi (508-597 AH/1114-1201 AD) suggests that Islamic Sufism has its roots prior to the year 200 AH (815 AD), and the term itself became widely known before that time.

Another opinion claims that the term "Sufism" appeared at the beginning of the third century AH (652 AD), but its roots can be traced back even further.

On the contrary, Ibn Taymiyyah (661-728 AH/1263-1328 AD) argued that the term "Sufism" was not popular in the first three centuries of Islam, and only became widespread in later centuries.⁴

2.2 Sufi Scholars:

- Abū ‘Alī Shaqrān ibn ‘Alī (d. 186 AH / 802 CE): He was one of the foremost ascetics of Kairouan, whose reputation spread far and wide. He became a devout, righteous man, blind of sight, diligent in prayer and fasting, and was credited with numerous karāmāt (miraculous gifts). He passed away in 186 AH / 802 CE.⁵
- Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Abd Rabbih al-Rub‘ī al-Zāhid (d. 247 AH / 861 CE): Considered among the ascetics of Kairouan, he studied under Sahnūn and Asad ibn Furāt. He remained a lifelong bachelor, steadfast in fasting by day, praying through the night, and reciting the Qur’ān, until his death in 247 AH / 861 CE.⁶
- Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Tha‘ālibī (b. 785 AH / 1383 CE): His full name was ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Makhlūf ibn Ṭalḥa. He was born in 785 AH / 1383 CE in Wādī Yissar in southeastern Algeria. Among his most important works is *al-Jawāhir al-Ḥasan fī Tafṣīr al-Qur’ān*. He died in 875 AH / 1470 CE.⁷
- Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad al-Tijānī (b. 150 AH / 767 CE): Born in the village of ‘Ayn Mādī near Laghouat in 150 AH / 767 CE, he excelled in jurisprudence, Qur’ānic exegesis, and ḥadīth, and founded the Tijānīyya ṭarīqa, which synthesizes earlier Sufi paths.⁸
- Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Būnī (d. 622 AH / 1225 CE): Full name Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī ibn Yūsuf Taqī al-Dīn. Renowned for his piety, integrity, and God-fearing character, he died in 622 AH / 1225 CE. His best-known works include *al-Mashhad al-Asnā fī Sharḥ asmā’ Allāh al-Ḥusnā*, *Mawāqif al-Gḥāyāt fī Asrā’ al-Riyāḍiyyāt*, and *Qūt al-Arwāḥ wa Miftāḥ al-Afarāḥ*.⁹
- ‘Alī ibn Imrān ibn Yūsuf al-Milyānī (d. 670 AH / 1271 CE): Known as Ibn al-Asāṭīr, he was distinguished in jurisprudence, principles of law, Sufism, and philosophy, earning the title “the Universal Scholar.” He died in Béjaïa in 670 AH / 1271 CE.¹⁰
- Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (b. 593 AH / 1196 CE): Born ‘Alī ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abd al-Jabbār in 593 AH / 1196 CE in the village of Ghamāra in Morocco, he was celebrated for his noble character, generosity, and compassion for the poor, and for his love of a balanced, moderate life.¹¹

- ‘Abd al-Salām ibn Mishīsh (d. 590 AH / 1184 CE): Full name ‘Abd al-Salām ibn Mishīsh ibn Abī Bakr ibn ‘Alī al-Idrīsī, a descendant of Idrīs I, founder of the Idrīsīd State. Born at Jabal Bin ‘Ārūs in northern Morocco, he memorized the Qur’ān at an early age, studied Sufism under Madīn ibn Barghūth al-Bajā’ī, and authored *Ighāthat al-Rāghibīn fī al-Ṣalāh wa al-Salām ‘alā afdal al-Mursalīn*. He died in 590 AH / 1184 CE.¹²
- Abū Bakr al-Ṭarṭūshī (b. 26 Jumādā I 450 AH / 1 August 1058 CE – d. 520 AH / 1126 CE): Full name Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Walīd ibn Muḥammad ibn Khalaf ibn Sulaymān ibn Ayyūb al-Qurashī al-Faḥrī al-Ṭarṭūshī. Born in Ṭarṭūsha on 26 Jumādā I 450 AH / 1 August 1058 CE, he was a scholar and teacher of philosophy and Sufism, best known for *Sirāj al-Mulūk*. He died in Ṭarṭūsha in 520 AH / 1126 CE.¹³
- ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ishbīlī (b. 510 AH / 1116 CE – d. 582 AH / 1186 CE): Born and raised in Seville, he studied under its leading scholars and was noted for his piety, asceticism, adherence to the Sunnah, and detachment from worldly affairs. His famous work is *Kitāb al-‘Āfiyah fī al-Taṣawwuf wa al-Zuhd*. He died in Béjaïa in 582 AH / 1186 CE.¹⁴
- Abū al-‘Abbās al-Mursī (b. 616 AH / 1219 CE): Born in Murcia in 616 AH / 1219 CE, he was a distinguished scholar, Sufi master, and virtuous teacher.¹⁵
- Aḥmad ibn al-Mubārak al-Rāshidī (b. 1297 AH / 1880 CE – d. 1389 AH / 1969 CE): A leading figure of the Shādhilī-Yūsufī order in the Islamic West, nicknamed “Ibn Ma‘zza.” He founded a zāwiya in his hometown that attracted students from across the region and was credited with karāmāt recorded by his disciple Muḥammad ibn Barīkā in *Manaqib al-Shaykh Sīdī Aḥmad b. Ma‘zza*. He died in 1389 AH / 1969 CE.¹⁶

2.3 Sources of Sufism in the Eastern Islamic World:

The Eastern Islamic world has produced many scholars who contributed significantly to spreading and teaching Sufism, which eventually reached the Islamic Maghreb and Andalusia. Notable figures include:

- **Shaykh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani (d. 470 AH/1077 AD):** Author of influential works like "Futuh al-Ghayb."
- **Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi (d. 638 AH/1240 AD):** Known for his monumental work "Futuh al-Makkiyya," a cornerstone of Sufi thought.¹⁷
- **Imam Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (d. 597 AH/1200 AD):** Author of several important works on Sufism and asceticism.

The Scientific Impact of Sufism in the Islamic Maghreb:

Sufism greatly contributed to the flourishing of the scientific movement in the Islamic Maghreb. The ascetics and Sufis played a significant role in the spread of religious and spiritual sciences, and their influence is evident in the establishment of scientific schools and the writing of scholarly works that covered various aspects of Islamic jurisprudence and Sufism. The Sufi schools became important centers of learning where scholars significantly contributed to the development of religious and scientific thought in the Maghreb.

2.4 Some Prominent Sufi Figures:

- Abu Abdullah al-Turqibadhi (429 AH/1037 AD).
- Abu al-Hasan ibn Ibrahim al-Hassari (454 AH/1062 AD).
- Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Muqri (600-681 AH/1203-1282 AD).
- Abu al-Qasim Ja'far bin Ahmad al-Muqri (327-381 AH/938-991 AD).
- Abu al-Hasan Ali bin Battadar al-Sayrafi (420-492 AH/1029-1098 AD).
- Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Farra' (276-377 AH/889-987 AD).
- Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Shabi (350-444 AH/961-1052 AD).
- Abu Abdullah al-Radhbar (391 AH/1000 AD).¹⁸

3. The Scientific Movement

3.1 Factors Contributing to the Flourishing of the Scientific Movement in the Islamic West:

The scientific movement is a crucial element in society, fostering

intellectual growth, renewal of thought, and stimulating the mind. I have categorized the contributing factors into internal and external factors that contributed to the development of the scientific movement:

3.1.1 Internal Factors:

Among the most prominent internal factors is political stability, which played an important role in the growth of intellectual and scientific movements¹⁹. Another important factor is the role of the sultans and governors in encouraging students of various branches of knowledge. They were also instrumental in establishing educational institutions such as elementary schools, mosques, madrasas, libraries, and bookshops for teaching²⁰. These factors led to a strong academic desire among students.²¹

3.1.1.1 Religious Factors:

A- The Ascetic Movement: The spread of Sufism in the Islamic West is attributed by some scholars and orientalist to Ibn Masarra al-Andalusi (269-389 AH), a proponent of philosophical Sufism. He is believed to have had a significant influence on all Sufis in the Islamic West, especially in the Almerya Andalusian school, which was home to several prominent Sufis, including Muhammad bin Isa al-Albiri and Ibn al-Arif (d. 537 AH/1142 AD)²² among others.

Thus, the ascetic movement appeared in the Maghreb around the first century, significantly influenced by the ascetic and Sufi developments in the East, which were transmitted to the Maghreb. The relationships of influence between the Maghreb and Andalusia in the field of asceticism can be seen in the large number of Andalusian ascetics who settled in the Maghreb²³, and the ascetic movement became independent of both political power and internal conflicts.²⁴

B- The Role of Rabat: Rabat (a place of worship and retreat) did not become widespread in the Maghreb until the fifth century AH. Initially, it was in a period of settling its internal and external matters. It then spread throughout the region, and as mentioned in the Holy Quran (Surah Al-Anfal, 8:60), "And prepare for them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war."²⁵

C- **Sufi Texts:** With the unification of the Islamic world from the East to the West, ideas began to intermingle, and Eastern Sufi texts were transmitted to the Maghreb and Andalusia. Examples include the book *Al-Ri'ayah* by Harith bin Asad al-Muhasibi (d. 254 AH/895 AD), *Qut al-Qulub* by Abu Muhammad bin Ali al-Makki (418-494 AH/1027-1100 AD), *Al-Risala al-Qushayriyya* by Abu al-Qasim al-Qushayri (d. 465 AH/1072 AD), and *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* by Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 505 AH/1111 AD), which were studied and taught in study circles and scholarly gatherings.²⁶

3.1.1.2 Political Factors:

A- The geographical expansion of the Islamic state and the entry of foreign customs and traditions, leading Muslims to neglect worldly matters and indulge in luxury and comfort.

B- Some attribute it to the civil strife that occurred after the assassination of Uthman ibn Affan (RA), and the conflict between Ali and Muawiya, as well as the stance of those who chose neutrality and isolated themselves from the people²⁷. The presence of multiple legal schools also contributed.

C- Others attribute it to the unrest that affected the Islamic state in Andalusia, especially during the time of the governors, which led to the disintegration of the situation and the spread of chaos.²⁸

3.1.1.3 Economic Factors:

A- Economic wealth, along with the spread of luxury and indulgence, led to neglecting religious duties, focusing more on worldly pleasures and the desires of the self. This economic disparity led to the emergence of Sufism in an attempt to reform the prevailing conditions.

B- Economic hardship also played a major role in the emergence of Sufism, especially among the wealthy, who were concerned with preaching and encouraging charity and giving. Most Sufis were from the poor, devout common folk.

C- Social afflictions, which were a direct consequence of both economic hardship and prosperity, caused individuals to stray from religious norms and engage in sinful behaviors like drinking, fornication, theft, and deceit. This situation led to the rise of Sufism as a countermeasure, promoting chastity, asceticism, and self-discipline in pursuit of spiritual elevation.²⁹

3.1.2 External Factors:

3.1.2.1 The Scholarly Journeys (Hajj):

- **Maghrebi Pilgrims to the East:** Musa bin Muawiya al-Samadhi (d. 225 AH/839 AD), Abu Othman Said bin Salam al-Maghribi (220-306 AH/835-918 AD).
- **Eastern Pilgrims to the Maghreb:** Dhul-Nun al-Akhmimi (160-245 AH/776-859 AD), Abu Abdullah al-Sabahi al-Basri (193-261 AH/808-874 AD).³⁰
- **Andalusian Scholars to the East:** Ziyad bin Abdul Rahman al-Lakhmi, known as Shabtoun (410-480 AH/1019-1087 AD)³¹, Umar and Harun bin Salem al-Qurtubi (392 AH/1001 AD).³²

3.1.2.2 The Acquired Knowledge:

The various factors combined to enrich the scientific life, especially with the influx of Andalusian scholars who played a prominent role, particularly during the reign of the Zayyanid dynasty. Additionally, the people of the Maghreb were eager for knowledge, and thus, the journey for knowledge and the pilgrimage to the East contributed to the growth and exchange of knowledge between the Maghreb, Andalusia, and the East³³. Knowledge was not restricted to scholars but also extended to merchants.³⁴

A: Rational Sciences: The Rational Sciences

In the Islamic intellectual tradition, the *rational sciences* are defined as forms of knowledge grounded in rational inquiry and demonstrative reasoning. They are not confined to a particular religion or creed, but rather constitute part of a shared human intellectual heritage. These sciences were traditionally distinguished from the *transmitted sciences* (*al-‘ulūm al-naqliyya*), which are based on revelation. This distinction, however, does not imply a rigid separation between the two domains, as Islamic intellectual history reveals a functional interdependence within a unified epistemic structure.

This distinction acquires particular methodological significance when examining the relationship between Sufism and the scientific movement. It is not methodologically sound to assume a direct influence of Sufism on the rational sciences without first defining the specific nature of Sufism in question, its social and institutional functions.³⁵

B: Mathematics: Mathematics, as the science of quantities and numerical and spatial relations, constitutes one of the fundamental pillars of rational knowledge, owing to its reliance on demonstrative certainty. In Islamic civilization, mathematics occupied a privileged position, not merely for abstract theoretical reasons, but also because of its close connection to legal and administrative applications, such as the science of inheritance (*'ilm al-farā'id*), almsgiving (*zakāt*), and the division of property. For this reason, its study came to be regarded as a *collective obligation* (*farḍ kifāya*).³⁶, especially in inheritance, division, and zakat (charity).³⁷

C: Arithmetic: Within this context, arithmetic emerged as an applied branch of mathematics. Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808 AH / 1405 CE) defined it as “a scientific craft concerned with the computation of numbers through addition and separation.” The widespread engagement of jurists with arithmetic demonstrates that the primary impetus for its development was practical and institutional rather than the direct result of spiritual or Sufi orientations. This observation necessitates caution against generalized claims regarding the influence of Sufism on the development of this field in the absence of precise textual or historical evidence.³⁸

D: Astronomy: In the Islamic tradition, astronomy was known as *'ilm al-hay'a*, the science concerned with the study of the movements, distances, and magnitudes of celestial bodies. Muslim scholars benefited from Greek and Indian astronomical legacies, yet they recontextualized this knowledge within a clearly defined functional framework, notably for determining the times of religious rituals, establishing the direction of the qibla, and navigation during travel.

This functional orientation indicates that the development of astronomy was closely tied to concrete religious and societal needs, as well as to scientific institutions such as observatories and educational circles, rather

than to Sufism as a spiritual current. Consequently, any claim of a Sufi contribution to astronomy must specify the mechanisms of influence involved—whether through patronage, the participation of individual Sufis in mathematical sciences, or through particular educational networks. Such questions cannot be bypassed by purely descriptive narratives.³⁹

E: **Medicine:** Medicine is the science concerned with the human body in states of health and disease. Ibn Khaldūn defined it as a craft based on rational observation and empirical investigation. In Islamic civilization, medicine developed through a critical engagement with the Greek medical heritage, supplemented by clear methodological and experimental advancements.⁴⁰

F: **Pharmacy:** Pharmacy, in turn, emerged as an applied science complementary to medicine, concerned with the preparation of drugs and the study of their effects. It became closely associated with chemistry, reflecting a sophisticated institutional and scientific structure. This integration between medicine and pharmacy underscores the difficulty of attributing their development solely to Sufi motivations, despite the presence of certain Sufi figures who contributed to these sciences as individual scholars rather than as representatives of an independent Sufi epistemic orientation.⁴¹

G: **Geography:** Muslim scholars devoted considerable attention to geography, which was known under designations such as *taqwīm al-buldān* (the configuration of lands) and *al-masālik wa-l-mamālik* (routes and realms). This interest arose in response to practical needs related to trade, pilgrimage, administration, and the expansion of political space. Geography combined description, observation, and field experience, making it a direct product of economic and political dynamics rather than the outcome of purely spiritual tendencies.⁴²

3.2 The Schools:

The Islamic East witnessed the emergence of multiple Sufi schools, some of which spread to the Maghreb while others disappeared. Sufism transcended its purely religious role to become a field of study that attracts both scholars and general readers alike. In studying these schools, it is crucial not to limit the inquiry to historical narration; rather, one must analyze the

nature of each school, its methods, and its relationship with the scientific movement, while acknowledging the complexity of Sufism and the diversity of its experiences, ranging from individual asceticism to organized orders and educational institutions. From this perspective, Sufism can be understood as a phenomenon intertwined with political, social, and scientific factors, allowing for an assessment of its actual contributions to knowledge production, far removed from a purely descriptive or one-sided approach.

Several schools emerged in the Islamic East, each characterized by its own unique style and approach to Sufism. Some of the most important schools that appeared in the Islamic East include:

3.2.1 Madina School:

In the Madina School, ascetics adhered to the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and they considered him (born 12 Rabi' al-Awwal 570 CE / passed away 12 Rabi' al-Awwal 632 CE) as their role model in asceticism. Notable figures from this school include:

- Ubaidah ibn al-Jarrah (d. 18 AH / 639 CE)
- Salman al-Farsi (d. 32 AH / 652 CE)
- Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib (d. 91 AH / 709 CE)⁴³
- Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman (d. 36 AH / 656 CE).⁴⁴

One of his sayings was, "The best among you are not those who leave the world for the Hereafter, but the best among you are those who balance both." Therefore, the Madina school followed the approach of the Salaf, adhering to the practices of the Prophet (PBUH), with asceticism and piety as key elements.⁴⁵

3.2.2 Basra School:

The Basra School was large in scale and a significant center of intellectual activity, divided into two main branches for those seeking knowledge.

A. 3.2.2.1 First Basra School:

One of the most prominent figures here was Abu Musa al-Ash'ari (d. 52 AH / 672 CE), who was known for his spiritual revolution.⁴⁶

B. 2.2.2.2 Second Basra School:

This school was founded by Hassan al-Basri (21-110 AH / 641-728 CE)⁴⁷, who was known for his asceticism and piety. Abdul Wahhab al-Sharani (1 Ramadan 898 AH - 23 Jumada al-Awwal 973 AH / 28 June 1493 CE - 24 March 1493 CE)⁴⁸ described him as: "He was dominated by fear as if the fire was destined only for him." The school followed Hassan al-Basri's views, drawing inspiration from the Prophet (PBUH). Al-Basri considered the Quran the key to enduring grief in this world.⁴⁹

C. 3.2.2 The Weepers (Al-Buka'in):

Ibn Taymiyyah (661-728 AH / 1263-1328 CE) referred to the ascetics of Basra by saying: "There was an exaggeration in asceticism and worship in Basra... Thus, it was said that jurisprudence was in Kufa, and worship was in Basra."⁵⁰

3.2.2 Kufa School:

The Kufa School emerged in the first century AH (6th century CE), with notable ascetics such as Sa'id ibn al-Jubayr, Tawus Kaysan (d. 106 AH / 724 CE), and Sufyan al-Thawri (d. 161 AH / 777 CE), who were revered for their piety, asceticism, and contribution to Islamic knowledge. Ibn Khallikan (621-681 AH / 1224-1282 CE) described him as: "A great scholar, with great knowledge of remembrance."⁵¹

3.2.3 Syrian School

This was the first school established in the Levant and created a curriculum that was in line with the nature of Sufism in the region. The principles of this school included hunger, fear, and tears. Some of the notable figures include Abu Darda al-Ansari (d. 594 / 653 CE) and Qasim ibn 'Uthman. The practice of hunger was linked to love, and love was intertwined with knowledge and obedience.

3.2.4 Egyptian School:

Founded by Abdullah ibn al-Aas (610 / 678 CE), and among its notable figures were Yazid ibn Habib and Al-Layth ibn Sa'ad (born 150 AH / 767 CE).

3.2.5 Khurasan School:

The spirit of Khurasan settled in the early 2nd century AH (8th century CE), where some of the most prominent Hadith scholars appeared⁵², including Abdullah ibn Mubarak (118-181 AH / 736-797 CE) and Fudayl ibn 'Iyad (109-187 AH / 727-803 CE).⁵³

4. Conclusion:

This study demonstrates that the presence of Sufism in the Islamic West emerged within a complex historical context shaped by intertwined political, economic, and religious factors, in addition to the dynamic practice of travel in the pursuit of knowledge and spiritual discipline. Consequently, the spread of Sufism cannot be attributed to a single cause, nor should it be understood as an autonomous phenomenon detached from the social and institutional conditions that facilitated its diffusion across different segments of society.

Although a number of Sufi figures contributed to shaping the religious and ethical landscape and fulfilled significant social functions, this does not necessarily warrant the assertion of a direct or structural influence of Sufism on the development of the rational sciences. The available historical sources, for the most part, do not provide explicit evidence of systematic Sufi contributions to fields such as mathematics or astronomy. Rather, they point to individual cases of scholars who combined spiritual concerns with scientific pursuits, without making Sufism a governing epistemic framework for their scientific activity.

Moreover, Sufi discourse itself did not consistently align with the requirements of demonstrative reason. From an early period, it was subject to criticism by jurists and theologians, particularly when experiential or illuminative tendencies prevailed at the expense of rational or textual methodologies. This historical reality necessitates approaching Sufism as a multi-layered phenomenon, rather than as a homogeneous intellectual current or one inherently conducive to scientific progress.

In contrast to interpretations that attribute the flourishing of the scientific movement to Sufi influence, alternative factors emerge that are more amenable to historical documentation. These include the role of educational institutions such as mosques and madrasas, the patronage of scholars by political authorities, the administrative and legal needs of society, and economic and commercial activity that demanded the development of precise cognitive tools. Furthermore, the transmission of books, translation movements, and transregional scholarly networks contributed to the formation of a scientific structure that was relatively stable and largely independent of spiritual currents.

Accordingly, the relationship between Sufism and the scientific movement, if it existed at all, should be understood in terms of an indirect and limited influence embedded within the broader cultural context, rather than as a decisive causal relationship. This perspective allows for moving beyond laudatory or reductionist approaches toward a critical historical reading that distinguishes between the ethical and social functions of Sufism and the epistemic and institutional conditions that governed the emergence and development of the rational sciences in Islamic civilization.

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