

**Representations of the Sacred in the Collective Mentality of the
Central Maghreb (6th–9th AH / 12th–15th CE):
A case Study of Hagiographic Sources**

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Abstract

This article examines the hagiographic, *karāmāt*-based discourse of Sufism and its foundation in the notion of the sacred within the medieval Western Islamic world. It argues that the sacred constituted a central mechanism of religious authority through which Sufi saints influenced collective mentalities, particularly during periods of political, economic, and social crisis. The study demonstrates that manifestations of the sacred appeared through symbolic representations, belief in baraka, and the perceived immediacy of answered supplications. However, the interaction between crisis and the sacred remained temporally and spatially limited, operating primarily within the spiritual framework of the Sufi community and the relationship between the shaykh and his disciples. The article further analyzes the mechanisms by which Sufi *karāmāt* discourse was consolidated, demonstrating that the sacred, in certain phases, incorporated elements of fear and violence; this raises questions related to sacred fear and sacred violence in medieval saintly discourse. Finally, it highlights how the dissemination of the sacred contributed to the emergence of socially contested practices, such as popular or heterodox Sufism, grave visitation, and their subsequent sacralization. The study concludes by emphasizing the essential role of hagiographic sources in documenting the history of mentalities in the medieval Maghreb.

This research aims to highlight the role of *Manāqib* literature (hagiography) in documenting the social history of the Islamic Maghreb, exploring the mechanisms of employing hagiographical texts as an epistemological tool to analyze societal mentalities during the period of study. The paper is structured into four primary axes: the first axis examines *Manāqib* literature and its role in

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historiographing the religious discourse of saint through their social functions. The second axis discusses "crisis" as a vital catalyst for activating the authority of the sacred. The third axis addresses the presence of the sacred in the social miracles (*karāmāt*) of Sufis by analyzing quantitative and statistical data extracted from primary hagiographical sources. Finally, the fourth axis analyzes "**charisma of the sacred**" as embodied in the figure of saint (*walī*).

The study concludes with several key results, most notably: reaffirming the scientific importance of *Manāqib* books as essential primary sources for studying the history of beliefs and mentalities. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that the mechanisms of consolidating Sufi hagiographical discourse were founded on a "**sacred**" that manifested in certain phases through themes of "fear and violence marginalized and implicit topics that are crucial for deeper understanding of the social structure of the Islamic Maghreb.

Keywords: Sacred; Sufism; Karāmāt; Hagiography.

Introduction

In the pursuit of documenting the social history of the Central Maghreb, *manāqib* literature emerges as a primary epistemological source for historiographing marginalized and implicit narratives. However, the corpora of these sources necessitate a systematic induction to elucidate their origins and the socio-historical reality they convey. Central to this inquiry is the role of the sacred in the construction of the *manāqib-karāma* text; as a medium saturated with symbolism, the text serves as a space for the manifestation of the sacred, thereby establishing the distinct identity of the group.

This duality encompassing both the cognitive (social accounts) and the methodological (sanctifying text) aligns with contemporary research trends that advocate for the utilization of neglected source materials. Consequently, the research problem is formulated as follows: Given the sanctifying character inherent in *manāqib* compilations, what insights do they provide into the social mentality of the Central Maghreb? Furthermore, what historical reality do these texts project regarding society between the 6th and 9th centuries AH (12th–15th centuries CE)?

In the pursuit of documenting the social history of the Central Maghreb, *Manāqib* literature emerges as a primary epistemological source for historiographing marginalized narratives. This topic is significant as it explores the "History of Mentalities" through the

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role of sacred in constructing the *Manāqib-Karāma* text, aiding in the understanding of micro-social structures and symbolic identity.

Regarding previous studies, scholarship has largely focused on Sufism within broader social contexts, such as the works of Nelly Salameh al-Amiri: "Sufism in Africa during the Medieval Period" and al-Tahar Bounabi: "Sufism in Algeria during the 6th and 7th centuries AH/ 12th and 13th centuries CE". While valuable, these studies treated the "Sacred" as a secondary element. This research identifies a gap: the lack of a specialized, critical focus on the "*Manāqib* Discourse" as an independent cognitive structure.

The methodology employed integrates the inductive approach with a quantitative statistical method. This choice is justified by the need to transform qualitative hagiographical narratives into measurable data through tables and charts, facilitating a deeper sociological analysis.

The study adopts a deductive and deconstructive approach (regard intérieurisant) in presenting its primary sources, seeking to utilize both biographical works, such as *Unwan al-Diraya* by al-Ghubrini, and hagiographic texts (*Manāqib*), most notably *AL-Manaqb al-Marzuqiyya* by Ibn Marzuq and *Rawdat al-Nasrin* by Ibn Sa'd. Rather than treating these texts as mere historical chronicles.

The study analyzes them as a spiritual and initiatory path (parcours initiatique) reflecting the virtues and prodigies of the Sufi saint. This methodology facilitates a deeper extraction of the mental structures and social representations that shaped the dynamics of the relationship between the "sacred" and society in the Central Maghreb between the 12th and 15th centuries CE.

1. Hagiographic Literature and the Logic of Attraction in the Religious Discourse of Sufi Saints and Society

The *manqaba* (hagiography) is defined as a cognitive subfield centered on the righteous saint, constituting the biography of a sanctified individual. Its primary function is to provide those devoted to the saint or the shaykh of a Sufi order with access to his biographical details, behavioral accounts, manifestations of his Sufism, and the spiritual illuminations of his path. Consequently, the subject of the *manqaba* is characterized by both sanctity and

sainthood, rendering the hagiography a fundamental component of Sufi discourse alongside elements such as litanies (*awrād*), glorifications (*tasbīḥāt*), and invocations of blessings (*taṣliyāt*)¹.

The sanctity perceived by Sufis emanates from the religious image embodied by the sufi saint through his societal interactions, intrinsically linked to his ethical and behavioral conduct. Accordingly, hagiographic texts reveal the significant status occupied by Sufis within society—a position derived from their active engagement. This is particularly evident given that the phenomenon of righteousness necessitated its own historiographical tradition due to the growing number of adherents and their expanding influence².

This dynamic is further underscored by the fact that historical sources rarely identify a field of social life in which the Sufi saint does not intervene, exercise influence, or wield authority³. This observation is corroborated by the scholar Dr. al-Tāhir Būnābī, who asserts that since the sixth century AH (twelfth century CE), the Sufi stratum has consistently demonstrated its capacity to maintain social equilibrium⁴. Such a prominent status necessitates an inquiry into the methods and mechanisms through which these figures integrated into the social fabric. To address this question, we present the following analytical framework:

Table (01): Functions of Sufism

1 Abdullah Atto: *The Literature of Miracles: From the Pact of Trust to the Tihami Discourse*, Amniya Press, 2014, pp. 47-48.

2 Saleh Awainy: "Transformations of the Bedouin Family in the Marrakesh Region during the Almoravid and Almohad Eras," published in the book *(The Bedouin Family in the History of Morocco)*, 1st ed., Dar As-Salam Library, Rabat, 2006, p. 27.

3 Taher Bounabi: *Sufism in Algeria during the 6th-7th centuries AH/12th-13th centuries CE*, Dar Al-Huda, Algeria, 2004, p. 178.

4 Taher Bounabi: *The Era of Sufis in Central Morocco - A Study of the Sufi Movement during the Medieval Period*, Vol. 4, Academic Book Series of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Mohamed Boudiaf University, M'sila, Algeria, 2017, p. 796.

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Name of the Sufi / Saint	Status / Occupation	Source
‘UnAbū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Khazrajī al-Anṣārī (591 AH / 1292 CE)	“The Just Judge”	‘Unwān al-Dirāya ⁵ (Al-Ghubrini, ‘Unwan, p.115)
Abū al-Najm al-Hilālī al-Ghubrīnī (7th century AH / 13th century CE)	Lived off the revenues of his land	‘Unwān al-Dirāya, p.185
Abū ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Balad	Earned his living by copying books	al-Manāqib al-Marzūqiyya, ⁶ (Ibn Marzuq, p.190–191).
Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. Marzūq (741 AH / 1340 CE)	Trade	al-Manāqib al-Marzūqiyya, p. 188
Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ghumārī (874 AH / 1470 CE)	Earned his living by selling firewood	Rawḍat al-Naṣrīn ⁷ , (Ibn Sa‘d, Al-Rawd, p. 320); al-Bustān ⁸ (Ibn Maryam, Al-Bustan: p. 32)

5 Abu al-Abbas al-Ghubrini: Title of Knowledge Concerning Those Scholars Known in the Seventh Century in Bejaia, ed. Adil al-Nuwayhid, Dar al-Afaq al-Jadida Publications, 2nd ed., Beirut, 1979.

6 Muhammad Ibn Marzuq: The Marzuqi Virtues, ed. Salwa al-Zahiri, al-Najah al-Jadida Press, 1st ed., Casablanca, 2008.

7 Muhammad Ibn Sa'd: The Garden of the Wildflowers in Introducing the Four Later Sheikhs, ed. Yahya Bu'aziz, ANAP Publications, Algeria, 2004.

8 Ibn Maryam: The Garden in Mentioning the Saints and Scholars of Tlemcen, ed. Muhammad Ibn Abi Shanab, al-Tha'alibiyya Press, Algeria, 1910.

Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Sharīf (694 AH / 1556 CE)	Teacher, Imam and <i>Khaṭīb</i> (preacher)	Al-Bustān, p. 281
Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Wahrānī	Teacher at the Great Mosque	Al-Bustān, p. 262
Abū Jum‘a al-Kawwāsh al-Matgharī al-Wahrānī	Shepherded goats	Al-Bustān, p. 72
Ibrāhīm b. Yakhlaf b. ‘Abd al-Salām al-Tansī	Issuing legal opinions (<i>fatwā</i>) in the Maghrib	(Al-Timbukti, <i>Kifāyat al-Muḥtāj</i> ⁹ : vol. 1, p. 143)

■ Analysis and Commentary

The data presented in the table illustrates that the professional roles occupied by the Sufis spanned a broad spectrum, ranging from educational and imamic functions to the judiciary and various artisanal activities predicated on individual labor. These roles facilitated two distinct social trajectories: some enabled Sufis to maintain a deliberate distance from political authority, while others positioned them in direct confrontation with it.

This confrontational stance frequently garnered significant support from the populace, as the breadth of Sufi knowledge allowed them to establish profound connections with the common people. The masses routinely sought the counsel of Sufis to navigate life's exigencies, requesting legal opinions (*fatwas*), judicial mediation, or instruction. Furthermore, their engagement in artisanal crafts provided a platform for unmediated communication with the public¹⁰.

These dynamics led researcher al-Tahir Bounabi to assert that "Sufi men of the virtues and prodigies" (*the ahl al-karamat*) predominantly belonged to the lower strata of society. This serves as an expression of the Sufi ethos regarding livelihood,

9 Ahmad Baba al-Timbukti: *The Sufficiency of the Needy*, ed. Muhammad Muti', Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Endowments, Morocco, 2000.

10 al-Tahir Bounabi: *Sufism in Algeria*, p. 179.

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characterized by the avoidance of any income from ambiguous or unknown sources¹¹. Consequently, the findings delineated in the table categorize the social condition of the saints and Sufis into two primary spheres:

- **Official Positions:** Roles that necessitated direct interaction or confrontation with the ruling power.
- **Individual Professions:** Occupations that reinforced their spiritual commitment to ethical earning while simultaneously integrating them into the fabric of the common classes.

Based on these observations, it is possible to identify the primary mechanisms depicted in hagiographic literature through which the Sufis integrated into society and consolidated their multifaceted social roles:

➤ **Councils of Preaching and Guidance: Religious and Educational Roles**

The Sufis attained significant prestige in the educational sphere through the instruction and moral disciplining of youth¹². Their assemblies were convened across diverse locales, including mosques, Sufi *ribāṭs*, and specific marketplaces¹³. These councils were instrumental in consolidating Islamic doctrine, elevating it beyond formal adherence toward a more profound dimension: the institutionalization of religion as a framework of social ethics. In this context, faith became a lived practice rooted in individual initiative, manifested through the provision of moral exemplars and virtuous conduct¹⁴.

➤ **Meeting Social Needs: Almsgiving from the Sufi Perspective**

The social influence of the Sufis permeated the broader fabric of society, a compassion intensified by the widespread integration

11 Nelly Salama Al-Amiri: *Sufism in Africa in the Middle Ages*, Dar Contourast, Tunisia, 2009, p. 74.

12 Title of the book, p. 26. The Garden, p. 121.

13 Ahmad Mahmoudi: *The General Public of the Far Maghreb in the Almohad Era*, Dar Ru'ya, 1st ed., Cairo, 2009, p. 142.

14 Abd al-Jalil al-Alami, *On the Origins of Sufism in Morocco*, Dar Abi Raqraq, 1st ed., Rabat, 2014, pp. 130-131.

of the populace into Sufi orders¹⁵. *Ṣadaqa* (almsgiving) emerged as the primary mechanism for social encompassing. This is exemplified by Abū Zakariyyā' Yaḥyā al-Zawwāwī (d. 611 AH/1210 CE), renowned for his munificence in benevolent acts toward the destitute¹⁶. Similarly, Abū al-Najm Hilāl ibn Yūnus al-Ghubrīnī (7th AH/13th CE) consecrated the majority of his land's produce to charitable ends¹⁷. Aḥmad ibn Idrīs al-Bijā'ī (d. after 760 AH/1360 CE) likewise maintained this tradition through prolific charitable contributions¹⁸. Consequently, certain figures earned the epithet "Servant of the Poor", reflecting their extensive philanthropic activity and care for the indigent.

Hagiographical records suggest that state authorities frequently appealed to Sufis during periods of calamity. In some instances, the agricultural holdings of the Sufis remained unaffected by crises—interpreted as a sign of *karāma* (saintly miracle)¹⁹—thereby becoming the primary resource for public relief when the state's capacity failed. A notable instance is that of the sufi saint Yaḥyā ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Qarn (9th AH/15th CE) (Ibn Maryam, *Al-Bustan*: 306)²⁰, who acted as the sole provider of relief to the authorities during a severe drought-induced famine that spared only his fields²¹.

15 Muhammad Istaiti, *The Poor in Morocco – Examples from the 16th-17th Centuries*, Zaman Publications, Rabat, 2006, p. 37.

16 The Title of Knowledge, p. 135.

17 Ibid, p. 138. Ibn Farhun, *The Golden Brocade in the Knowledge of the Scholars and Notables of the School*, ed. Ma'mun ibn Muḥyi al-Din al-Jannan, Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1st ed., Beirut, 1996, p. 138.

18 Ibn Qunfudh, *The Companionship of the Poor and the Glory of the Humble*, ed. Muhammad al-Fasi and Adolphe Faure, University Center for Scientific Research, Rabat, 1965, p. 52.

19 *karāmā*: Any extraordinary act performed by someone whose righteousness in religion is evident, who follows the straight path of Islamic law from the Quran and Sunnah, both outwardly and inwardly, and with true conviction. It is unanimously agreed that such virtues and prodigies do not occur in a transgressor. Ali Zay'ur, *Sufi karāmā, Myth, and Dream*, Dar al-Andalus, 2nd ed., Beirut, 1984, p. 83.

20 Ibn Maryam translated him as: "The learned, righteous, and most knowledgeable scholar". See: *Al-Bustan*, p. 306.

21 Ibid, p. 307.

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To facilitate these social welfare efforts, some Sufis accepted or actively sought endowments from rulers to support their needy disciples, as demonstrated by Abū al-Hādī Miṣbāḥ (d. 748 AH/1347 CE) in Constantine. Conversely, other Sufis focused on spiritual consolation, emphasizing the elevated spiritual ranks and divine standing of the impoverished²². This discourse provided psychological solace to the needy, fostering veneration for the sufi saints and reinforcing the notion that poverty represents a significant spiritual station within the Sufi tradition.

This intersection of society and Sufism utilized *karāmāt* as a mechanism to reinforce the concept of the sacred, encouraging the public to view it as a source of deliverance. Given that the authorities themselves sought Sufi intervention, a conviction was solidified within the collective consciousness of the marginalized: that the resolution of crises could only be achieved through figures belonging to the realm of the righteous.

2. Crisis and *Manāqib* Activity: The Crisis as a Vital Sphere for Activating the Sacred

The crisis served as a critical domain for the manifestation and interaction of Sufi *karāma* within the social fabric, facilitating the role of the sacred in mitigating hardship and facilitating recovery. For instance, during the famine that afflicted Béjaïa in 611 AH/1214 CE, the sufi saint Abū Zakariyyā' ibn Yaḥyā al-Zawāwī mobilized resources by collecting funds from the affluent to support the indigent, thereby preserving their dignity and alleviating the necessity of begging²³. Similarly, Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn Marzūq (681–741 AH/1282–1340 CE) distributed provisions to the needy during periods of scarcity from granaries specifically designated for the poor²⁴.

The scope of Sufi intervention extended beyond economic exigencies to encompass moral and social spheres. The righteous actively opposed moral disintegration and social deviations, confronting practices such as prostitution and the dissemination of

22 Rawdat al-Nasrin, p. 160.

23 Ibn al-Zayyat, *Al-Tashawwuf ila Rijal al-Tasawwuf*, ed. Ahmad Tawfiq, Al-Najah al-Jadida Press, 2nd ed., Casablanca, 1997, p. 429.

24 *Al-Manaqib al-Marzuqiyya*, pp. 190-191.

intoxicants. To institutionalize these efforts, they established mosques in rural regions and transformed *ribāṭs* into centers for moral and spiritual *tarbiya* (education and discipline)²⁵.

The Sufis' refusal to pay taxation can be interpreted as a strategic act of solidarity with farmers, herders, and the inhabitants of rural and pastoral hinterlands. This stance significantly deepened their influence among the commonality, who increasingly looked toward Sufi figures to alleviate the oppressive burden of state levies²⁶.

It can be inferred that the emergence of the sufi saint and the public manifestation of his *karāmāt* typically occur at the nexus of extreme need, following the exhaustion of conventional solutions. This intervention manifests either through an answered supplication or the perceived blessing inherent in the sufi saint's *āthār* (relics).

Furthermore, hagiographical literature (*manāqib*) attained a unique historiographical importance compared to the chronicles of traditional *akhbārī* historians. These texts promoted an "alternative project" by documenting the totality of the sufi saint's life, his community, and his socio-religious interventions²⁷. In doing so, *manāqib* literature provided the discursive framework that legitimized and enabled the societal acceptance of *karāma*-based performance as a viable response to crisis.

3. Representations of the Sacred in the Social Karāmāt of Sufism

The manifestations of the sacred within the discourse of *karāmāt* may be examined through the social presence of Sufi prodigies as documented in *manāqib* (hagiographical) texts. By tracing the trajectory of this presence through a statistical analysis of these records, the primary domains of social Sufi *karāmāt* have been identified as follows:

Table No. (02): The presence of social karāmāt in *manāqib* texts

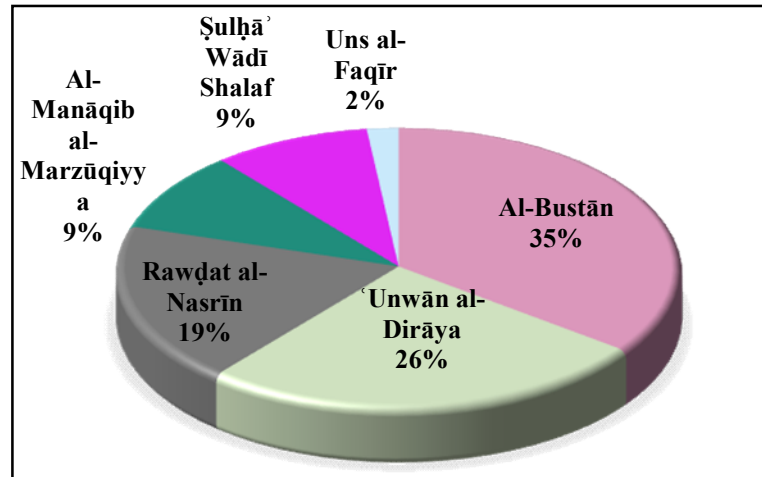
25 Rawdat al-Nasreen, p. 185, Abd al-Jalil al-Alami, previous reference, p. 132.

26 Ammour Sakina: The Rif of Central Morocco in the 6th-7th centuries AH/11th-12th centuries CE (A Socio-Economic Study), Magister's Thesis, University of Constantine, 2011/2012 p. 250.

27 In a statistical analysis of the forms of Sufi prodigies based on hagiographical sources, I obtained (123) Sufi prodigies, of which (30) were prodigies of answered prayers and blessings, equivalent to (24.39%).

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Total	Uns al-Faqīr	Şulḥā' Wādī Shalaf	Al-Manāqib al-Marzūqiyya	Rawḍat al-Nasrīn	ʿUnwān al-Dirāya	Al-Bustān	Source	people's needs	Fulfilling
54	01	05	05	10	14	19	Frequency		
100	2	9	9	19	26	35	Percentage (%)		



▪ **Analysis and Commentary**

The social dimension inherent in Sufi *karāmāt* (saintly miracles) can be attributed to the function of hagiographical texts in projecting the social persona of the sufi saint, thereby positioning them as an alternative agency for resolving societal crises. Even practices such as *tabarruk* (seeking blessing) and the solicitation of supplication (*duʿāʾ*) are situated within the social sphere of Sufism, as numerous hardships were perceived to be resolved through the intercession or the blessed presence of a sufi saint.

The proliferation of these *karāmāt* is particularly notable during the 8th–9th centuries AH (14th–15th centuries CE). This phenomenon is likely linked to the spiritual dynamism and inherent vitality of Islam, reflecting its enduring capacity to manifest in diverse religious forms across varied temporal and spatial

contexts²⁸. Within this framework, the religious and moral archetype played a pivotal role in fortifying social bonds and exerting influence over the masses. This influence was especially potent when linked to the religious domain—an association that implies a connection with the sacred, ensuring widespread public acceptance²⁹. Consequently, the presence of the sacred within social hagiographical discourse is fundamentally anchored in the miraculous act. Thus, *karāma* serves as a manifestation of the sacred, through which authority is exercised in various forms, contingent upon the extent of society's functional need for it.

The diversity of social *karāmāt* reflects multifaceted modes of representing the sacred, impacting numerous aspects of the daily lives of the general populace. The following table provides a systemic illustration of these forms:

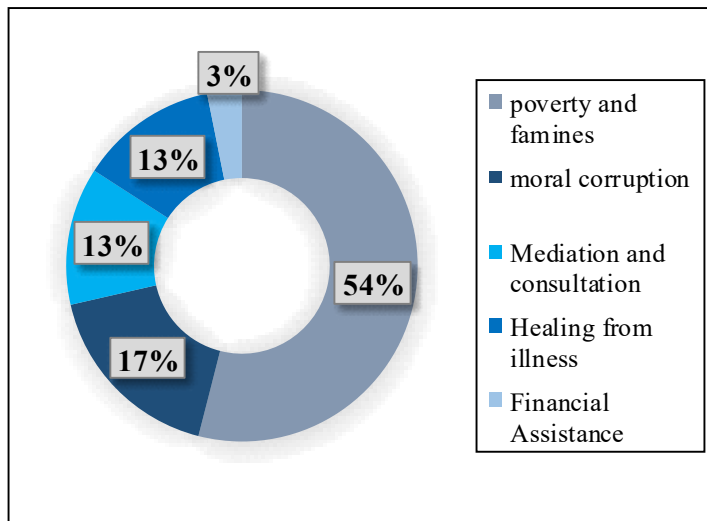
Table (03): Forms of Social *Karāmāt* in Hagiographical Texts

Total	Domains of Social Karāmāh					
	Financial Assistance	Healing from Illnesses	Mediation and Consultation	Moral Corruption	Poverty and Famines	
63	02	08	08	11	34	Number
100	3	13	13	17	54	Percentage (%)

28 Al-Tahir Bunabi, *The Age of Sufism in Central Maghreb*, Vol. 3, p. 369.

29 Luay Ali Khalil, *Miracles in the Arab-Islamic Heritage*, Arab Heritage Journal, No. 97, p. 171.

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▪ **Analysis and Commentary:**

Quantitative data indicates that social *karāmāt* (saintly miracles) diversified significantly, appearing most prominently in relation to poverty and famine. This category comprises 34 *karāmāt*, representing 54% of the recorded instances. Such a high frequency suggests that society was grappling with profound socio-economic crises. Other recorded types such as moral corruption 17%, favoritism, consultation, healing(13%), and financial(3%) aid can be situated as by-products or direct outcomes of this primary socio-economic distress.

The saints (*awliyā'*) endeavored to articulate a social vision by proposing a distinctively Sufi methodology to address crisis-ridden phenomena, particularly in the absence of the legalistic authority of the jurist (*faqīh*). This vision constitutes an integrated project designed to address social lacunae, whether stemming from natural disasters and their repercussions or from the administrative oversights of the central authority.

Sufi *karāmāt* emerged within a symbolic framework intended to transform social reality. These symbols convey specific connotations regarding the sphere of the sacred and its transition between modes of discourse, behavior, and the Sufi imagination—the latter being the domain where the sacred is transmuted into lived

experience³⁰. Sufi discourse maintains its sacred character through this reliance on symbolism, exploring intended meanings through the faculty of the imagination³¹.

In its nascent stages, Sufism did not achieve immediate or universal acceptance; consequently, its adherents adopted specific communicative strategies to preserve the integrity of Sufi discourse³². The heavy employment of symbolism raises critical questions regarding the intellectual capacity of the recipient. One must consider whether a discourse so densely laden with symbolic meaning necessitates a recipient with a high degree of epistemological awareness, even when directed at the disciples (*murīdīn*). It should not be assumed that these disciples inherently possessed an advanced understanding of Sufi concepts, as they were often categorized among the general populace despite their adherence to a shaykh and his path.

The semiotic dimension is therefore complex, requiring a specific cultural and educational threshold to decode the underlying reality and intent of the discourse. Ultimately, this can be classified as a multi-dimensional discourse, rooted in the social base to facilitate a project of radical change a process entirely contingent upon the analysis and interpretation of those symbols.

4. The Charisma of the Sacred (The Sufi Saint)

Hagiographical literature (*manāqib*) constructs narratives centered on the sufi saint's "swift anger" and the inevitable efficacy of his supplication when his intercessions are rebuffed—whether regarding the mitigation of fiscal injustice, the release of a prisoner, or the fulfillment of specific conditions. In such instances, his *baraka* (blessing) is portrayed as being immediately withdrawn

30 Nour Eddine Zahy, *The Islamic Sacred*, Dar Toubkal Publishing, 1st ed., Morocco, 2005, p. 8.

31 So, is it a subjective and individual experience that transforms into a collective perception, that is, the experience of a "Sufi" in which the collective imagination believes? Could it be illusory? Couldn't a flaw occur in the process of projecting this type of experience, leading to an incorrect understanding and consequently to counterproductive results?

32 Ahmed Obeidli, *The Maghrebi Sufi Poetic Discourse in the 6th and 7th Centuries AH (A Thematic and Artistic Study)*, (Magister's Thesis), University of Hadj Lakhdar, Batna, 2005, p99.

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from the material world. Consequently, there is a perceptible dread among governors and sultans concerning the sufi saints' imprecations and their invocations of divine retribution³³. This dynamic instills widespread panic, ensuring that a sufi saint's mere threat or warning serves as a sufficient and effective instrument of charismatic domination, which is continually reproduced and imposed upon the political order³⁴.

Ibn Qunfudh asserts that the populace attributed the death of the Marinid sultan Abū al-Ḥasan al-Marīnī (731–752 AH / 1331–1348 CE) to his refusal of the request made by the sufi saint Abū al-Ḥādī Miṣbāḥ (d. 764 AH / 1362 CE). The sufi saint had reportedly demanded the sultan's withdrawal from the lands of Ifrīqiya, subsequently entering a spiritual retreat in Constantine to appeal to God against him³⁵. Similarly, the demise of Sultan Yūsuf ibn Ya'qūb (658–685 AH / 1259–1286 CE) during the eight-year siege of Tlemcen is ascribed to the wrath of the sufi saint Abū Zayd 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Hazmī³⁶, whose plea to lift the city's blockade had been rejected by the sovereign³⁷.

Despite the temporal disparity between the supplications of the sufi saints and the eventual demise of the sultan, the profound belief in saintly power established a direct causal link between the two. This phenomenon underscores that fear served as a

33 Abd al-Hadi Bayad, *Manifestations of the Medieval Approach in the Social Integration Methodology of Medieval Moroccan Sufis*, published in **Sunni Sufism in the History of Morocco**, Zaman Publications, Casablanca, 2014, p. 220.

34 Nelly Salama Al-Amiri, *Sainthood and Society in the Hafsid Era*, Publications of the Faculty of Arts, Manouba, Tunisia, 2001, p. 310.

35 Rawdat Al-Nasreen, pp. 50-51.

36. From the people of Aghamat, the righteous sufi saint with the great prodigies, died in the city of Fez after his departure from Tlemcen in the year 706 AH/1306 CE and was buried near the Mosque of the Patient Ones. Ibn al-Qadi: *Jadhwat al-Iqtibas*, Dar al-Mansur, Rabat, 1943, p. 410.

37 Al-Tansi: *Tarikh Bani Ziyān*, excerpt from *Nazm al-Durar wa al-Aqyan fi Bayan Sharaf Bani Ziyān*, ed. Mahmoud Agha Bouayad, Moufūm Publishing, Algeria, 2011, p. 143.

foundational source for the dominance of sufi saints within the social hierarchy.

Historical narratives frequently depict the sufi saint in direct confrontation with the sultan, encounters in which the former invariably emerges victorious through the exercise of charismatic authority. A notable instance involves Yūsuf ibn Ya‘qūb al-Mallārī (d. 764 AH/1362 CE)³⁸, who petitioned the *Hafsid* governor of Constantine for various provisions. When the governor refused to release a specific prisoner at the sufi saint's request, al-Mallārī reportedly declared: “If you do not release him, I shall depart from your authority, but not in goodwill”³⁹. Facing such spiritual pressure, the governor was compelled to acquiesce.

Furthermore, a prevailing public conviction linked the illness and death of sultans and provincial governors to these saintly invocations. It is recorded that Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar al-Huwārī (843 AH/1439 CE) invoked against certain Arab factions and corrupt elements who had plundered public wealth, resulting in the horrific death of their leader⁴⁰. Other antagonists were reportedly afflicted by physical pain, chronic illness, or terrifying nocturnal visions involving pursuing animals’ illusory scenes that served to destabilize the psyche and haunt the subconscious of the transgressors⁴¹.

The general populace was equally subject to this paradigm, particularly those who expressed skepticism regarding saintly miracles (*karāmāt*). For example, although Ibrāhīm al-Tāzī (866 AH/1462 CE) often met the denial of his own prodigies with a smile, hagiographical accounts note that many such deniers faced diverse forms of retribution, ranging from prolonged imprisonment

38 Yusuf ibn Yaqub al-Buyusifi (680 AH/764 AH/1281-1362 CE), maternal grandfather of Ibn Qunfudh al-Qustantini, possessed complete blessings and widespread honor. Among his students was the sufi saint Abu Abdullah al-Saffar. See: Anas al-Faqir, p. 45.

39 Ibid, p. 40.

40 He is Uthman ibn Musa ibn Mas'ud al-Amiri, one of the corrupt and extravagant Arabs. See: Rawdat al-Nasrin, p. 121.

41 Al-Bustan, p149, A sufi saint's intercession rejected by the sultan = the sufi saint's punishment by unleashing an animal (a snake) = the sufi saint's intervention again at the sultan's request = the lifting of the wrath + the sufi saint receiving endowments.

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to extended exile⁴². In Tlemcen, a residence reportedly fell into ruin and was abandoned following a sufi saint's supplication against an owner who had denied his miraculous nature⁴³ (Al-Malali, *Al-Mawahib*: 111).

Hagiographical texts even attribute major geopolitical shifts to these spiritual interventions, such as the Spanish occupation of Oran. This event was interpreted as the consequence of an invocation by Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Huwārī after the city's inhabitants unjustly killed his son⁴⁴ (Al-Zayani, *Dalil*: 60–61), Muḥammad. These accounts vividly illustrate the transformation of social charisma into a potent tool serving the religious and personal interests of the sufi saint.

The Sufi *karāma* functions as a narrative of "effective awe," wherein the sufi saint (*walī*) intimidates, challenges, retaliates, penalizes, and—under specific conditions—grants pardon. This authority is predicated upon a foundation of sacred fear, articulated metaphorically through the imagery of a thorn: "He is like a thorn in mud"⁴⁵ (Al-SABTI, 2001: 438) signifying that his spiritual arrows strike those who cause harm, just as a thorn pierces one who treads upon it unawares. It represents a latent power exercised by the sufi saint whenever circumstantial necessity dictates.

The efficacy of the sufi saint's indignation and the guaranteed fulfillment of his supplication ensure the dissemination and unquestioned acceptance of his discourse. This occurs without the requirement of empirical witnessing, as hagiographical accounts are transmitted through a process of "mythical weaving," imbued with profound elements of fascination and dread. Consequently, this

42 Rawdat al-Nasrin, p. 186.

43 Al-Malali: *Al-Mawahib al-Qudsiyya fi al-Manaqib al-Sanusiyya*, ed. Allal Bourbiq, Dar Kardada, Bousaada, 2011, p. 111.

44 Rawdat al-Nasrin, p. 18; Al-Zayani: *Dalil al-Hayran wa Anis al-Sahran*, ed. Al-Mahdi Bouabdelli, published by the Algerian Ministry of Mujahideen, 2014, pp. 60-61.

45 Abdel-ahad al-Sbtti, On karama and Prestige, *Al-Manahil Magazine*, Moroccan Ministry of Culture and Communication, (54-64), Rabat, 2001, p438.

discourse—centered on emotional resonance and rigorous control—established a tripartite domination over society:

- **Political Authority:** Fear of the structural violence exerted by the central state (including taxation, nepotism, neglect, and political marginalization).
- **Legal-Religious Authority:** Fear of the jurists (*fuqahā'*), characterized by intimidation and reprimand for the purpose of enforcing canonical rulings.
- **Saintly Authority:** The emergence of a distinct form of fear embodied by the sufi saint, distinguished by a sacrality derived from his immediate effectiveness within his socio-spiritual sphere.

The populace embraced this latter form of authority because it provided immediate efficacy.

5. Adaptation of the Sacred Discourse and the Social Mentality of the Central Maghreb.

If we define "charism" as an extraordinary quality -one rooted in a supernatural authority that transcends ordinary human capacity⁴⁶ (AL-SABTI, 2001: 438), we find a profound resonance with the concept of *karāma* (virtues and prodigies) Within this framework, the *wali* (sufi saint) does not merely perform miracles; he acts a vessel for the sacred, emerging as a providential figure who steps in to mitigate the structural crises of his society.

Often, the remedy for such crisis's springs from their very epicenter. The *wali* (sufi saint) ascends to a heroic archetype precisely because he originates from the common classes (*al-āmma*)⁴⁷. For this social stratum, the resolution of hagiographic narratives (*manāqib*) -whether the subject is a sophisticated scholar or a simple man- is enough to consecrate him as a saint, especially when his life is shrouded in mystery and ambiguity⁴⁸.

In a society marginalized by political power and yearning for transformation, the sufi saint became an inevitable refuge. For a population whose survival depended on the land, the constant threat of natural disasters created a deep-seated "fear complex". This existential anxiety drove collective psychological search for a savior

46 Abdel-ahad al-Sbtti, Ibid, p436.

47 Luay Ali Khalil, op. cit. p 173.

48 Mahmoud abdel- Moula The sufi Saint and al-karāmāt], *Al-Hayat al-Thaqafiya*, N°101, Tunisia, 2005, p42.

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a spiritual force capable of taming nature⁴⁹. In this context, the pursuit of metaphysical salvation was not an abstract theology, but a practical necessity for survival. Since the livelihoods of this population were inextricably linked to the land, they suffered from a perpetual fear regarding natural disasters that decimated crops and livestock.

Ultimately, the presence of the sacred was established within the social fabric through recognized religious practices such as *du‘ā* (supplication), *ruqya* (incantation), and the distribution of *baraka* (blessings).

Yet, an analysis of social interaction reveals a subtle, almost paradoxical, tension between "the sacred" and "the religious". The sacred acts as an enigmatic, magnetic energy, while Islam sought to channel this toward the Divine⁵⁰, the concept of *AL-Wilāya* suggests that worship is not a strictly necessary condition for its attainment. As Ibn Khaldun noted; sainthood (*AL-Wilāya*) does not strictly depend on any specific act of worship⁵¹. Because *karāma* (virtues and prodigies) are seen as divine gifts, a *wali* might be an erudite scholar or a *majdhūb* (a divinely-attracted man) whom many perceive as mad. The true test remains the public display of supernatural virtues⁵². In seeking the security provided the sacred, society often blurred the rigid boundaries of formal religion.

The public's devotion to the *wali* (sufi saint) was rarely born of a philosophical grasp of Sufi theory; it was a response to his practical role in their lives. By resolving conflicts and feeding the hungry during famines, the saint moved from the realm of the spiritual to the realm of social action. Thus, the *karāma* evolved: it was no longer just a supernatural event, but a symbolic bridge between spiritual authority and the material needs of the people.

49 Al-Hilali Yasser, Social Stratification in the Moroccan rural Wilderness," published in the book (The Bedouin Family in the History of Morocco), Dar As-Salam Library, Rabat, 2006, p.79.

50 Nour Eddine Zahy, op. cit. p 27.

51 Ibn Khaldun Abd Al-Rahman, *Al- Muqaddima* [The introduction], ed. Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani, Dar Ibn-jawzi, cairo, 2010, p 92.

52 robert Brunschvig, History of Ifriqiya during the Hafsids Era, Hamadi al-Sahli. Tran, (Vol. 2), Dar al Gharb al-Islami, Beirut, 1988, p340.

Conclusion:

- ✓ The hagiographic, *karāmāt*-based discursive construction of Sufism is predicated upon the concept of the sacred, through which it exercises religious authority to influence the collective social mentality. This authority manifests across various social spheres to mitigate the severity of political, economic, and social crises. Within this configuration, the sacred assumes diverse forms, embodied in symbols, the belief in baraka (blessing), and the perceived rapid response to supplication.
- ✓ The interaction between crisis and the vital presence of the sacred remained temporally and spatially circumscribed; there is no historical record of a sufi saint overcoming a comprehensive famine across the entirety of the Central Maghreb. This interaction was confined to those spiritually affiliated with the Sufi sphere, specifically defined by the relationship between the shaykh and his disciples.
- ✓ The mechanism for consolidating the discourse of Sufi *karāmāt* is established upon the sacred, which, during certain phases, was embodied through the notions of fear and violence. This necessitates an investigation into the themes of "sacred violence" and "sacred fear" within hagiographical discourse during the medieval period.
- ✓ The proliferation of the sacred contributed to the emergence of various socially condemned practices, such as heterodox (popular) Sufism, the phenomenon of seeking blessings, and the sanctification of graves. The sufi saint sought to transfer this sacrality from his own person to all elements associated with him, ensuring his continued presence through charisma within the collective mentality.
- ✓ Writing the history of mentalities in the western Islamic world during the medieval period cannot dispense with hagiographic sources.

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