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BOOK REVIEW

Prof. Dr. Hasan Kâmil Yılmaz. *An Outline of Sufism and Sufi Orders (Ana Hatlarıyla Tasavvuf ve Tarîkatlar)*. 29th edition. Istanbul: Ensar Publication, 2019. 367 p.

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Abstract

The book has a preface, an introduction, and five main chapters. In the introduction, the author aims to clarify contemporary perceptions of Sufism, mysticism, and the differences between mysticism and Sufism, thereby addressing any conceptual confusion the reader might have. In the first chapter, the author examines the definition of Sufism, its characteristics, the etymology and meaning of the term 'Sufi', its sources, subject matter, objectives, and its relationship with other sciences. The second chapter delves into the ranks of Sufis and the history of Sufism, categorised under the periods of Asceticism (zuhd), Sufism, and the Sufi Orders (tariqahs). The third chapter provides a detailed analysis of Sufi concepts, while the fourth chapter thoroughly explores Sufi institutions (tariqahs). In the fifth chapter, the author concludes the book by examining Sufi issues under two main headings: Issues in Sufi Thought and Issues in Practical Sufism. The author has successfully systematised topics and independently addressed them in various Sufi books, consolidating them into a single volume. In doing so, the author employs clear and straightforward language. The topics are organised and divided into sections and headings, avoiding unnecessary details while thoroughly explaining the subject matter. Comparisons are made based on the similarities and differences between concepts, aiming to clarify the subject in the reader's mind. Abstract ideas are made concrete through examples, enhancing understanding. Quranic verses and Hadiths support the topics, and sufficient use is made of fundamental sources in the field. Although there are instances of repetition, they are not prominent. This book effectively fills a gap in the field and is a rare work offering comprehensive information.

Keywords: Sufism, Sufi History, Sufi Concepts, Sufi Institutions, Sufi Issues.

Sufism is a branch of knowledge that involves worshipping Allah as if one sees Him, embodying good morals, purifying oneself from the evil traits of the ego, avoiding worldly attachments, and focusing on the love of Allah. The origins of Sufism can be traced back to the Hadith of Gabriel, where the Hz. Gabriel comes to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and asks several questions. When Gabriel asks, “O Messenger of Allah, what is faith?” the Prophet lists the articles of faith. When asked, “O Messenger of Allah, what is Islam?” the Prophet lists the pillars of Islam. When asked, “O Messenger of Allah, what is excellence (ihsan)?” the Prophet replies, “It is to worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you do not see Him, He certainly sees you.” From the answers to these questions, the sciences of theology (kalam), jurisprudence (fiqh), and Sufism (tasawwuf) respectively emerged. Numerous works have been written on these fundamental sciences of Islam. Hasan Kamil Yılmaz, with his book “Ana Hatlarıyla Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar” (An Outline of Sufism and Sufi Orders), contributes to this field with a work that examines Sufism from its inception to the present day from various perspectives, using clear and comprehensible language that appeals to diverse audiences.

The book comprises an introduction and five chapters. The introduction provides a brief overview of contemporary perceptions of Sufism and mysticism. The differences between Sufism and mysticism in terms of purpose, method, content, and experiences are highlighted. The author begins by stating that the concepts of Sufism and mysticism are often confused. The author addresses this confusion by briefly explaining the differences between the two with examples. It is emphasised that while Sufism offers spiritual elevation, mysticism involves transient pleasures. Although suffering holds significant importance in mysticism, it is not considered crucial in Sufism. The author notes that methods of disciplining the ego in Sufism vary according to individual personality structures, unlike in mysticism.

Additionally, while the mystic focuses solely on ecstatic experiences, the Sufi is both an ecstatic and a seeker of knowledge. The importance of remembrance (dhikr) and companionship with a spiritual guide (murshid) in Sufism is contrasted with their lack of significance in mysticism. Finally, the author underscores that mysticism is about the soul’s dominance over the body, whereas Sufism aims to purify the soul and its union with Allah.

In the first chapter, the author provides general information about Sufism. The author asks, “What is Sufism?” and offers several answers. Sufism is described as the spiritual life of Islam and the institutionalised form of the spiritual authority represented by the Islamic Prophet, which has spread and persisted to the present day. The primary characteristics of Sufism are expressed in the following sentences: Sufism is the science of states understood through spiritual experience. Its subject matter is the knowledge of Allah (ma’rifatullah). It is learned

under the guidance of a master (ustad). The spiritual guide (murshid or shaykh) must possess an unbroken chain of transmission (silsila) reaching back to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Sufism is not a bookish knowledge but a science beyond reason (mâ verâe'l-akl). It is entered through specific paths called tariqas, which lead to Allah.¹

The origin of the terms “Sufi” and “Sufism” is disputed. The most widely accepted root word is the Arabic “sûf,” meaning wool. Abû Nasr Serrâj, one of the earliest classical Sufi writers, derives the term “Sufi” from this root, based on wearing wool, which he refers to as the path of the prophets, saints, and purified ones.²

Regarding the definition and sources of Sufism, Sufis have provided numerous descriptions, often citing examples from the Qur'an and the Sunnah: Sufism is asceticism (zuhd), good character, the purification of the heart (tasfiyah al-qalb), and the refinement of the self (tazkiyah al-nafs). Sufism is uprightness, complete submission to Allah, and spiritual union (wisal). While it embodies the spiritual life of Islam, Sufism is also an esoteric and mystical knowledge ('ilm al-batin wa al-ladun).

The primary authors and sources contributing to Sufism include: Hâris b. Esed Muhâsibî: *er-Riâye li-hukûkillâh*, Hakîm Tirmizî: *Hatmü'l-velaye*, Abû Nasr Serrâc: *el-Luma*, Abû Bekir Kelâbâzî: *et-Taarruf*, Abû Tâlib Mekkî: *Kûtü'l-kulûb*, Abdülkerim Kuşeyrî: *er-Risâle*, Hucvirî: *Keşfu'l-Mahcûb*, Gazzâlî: *Ihyâ' 'ulûm ad-dîn*, Suhreverdi: *Avârifu'l-maârif*, Muhyiddin Ibn Arabî: *Fusûs al-Hikam* and *al-Futûhât al-Makkiyya* and Mevlânâ Jalâl ad-Dîn Rûmî: *Masnavi*.

The author then discusses the relationship between Sufism and other sciences. First, he addresses the connection between Sufism and other Islamic sciences. Sufism is related to the science of exegesis (tafsir) through its allegorical method (ishari) in addition to the traditional techniques of narration (riwaya) and reasoning (diraya). It is linked to the science of Hadith through the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) spiritual and ascetic life. Sufism's aspect as the inner dimension of jurisprudence (fiqh al-batin) connects it to the science of jurisprudence (fiqh). Its use of the methods of unveiling (kashf) and inspiration (ilham) to explain issues concerning Allah, humanity, and the universe relates it to the science of theology (kalam). Finally, Sufism's aim of actualising practical ethics ties it to the science of ethics (akhlaq).

The author then discusses Sufism and social sciences. While philosophy relies on reason to understand issues concerning the existence, God, and humanity, Sufism utilises pathways of

¹ Hasan Kamil Yılmaz, *Ana Hatlarıyla Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar* (İstanbul: Ensar Neşriyat, 1994), 17-19.

² Hasan Kamil Yılmaz. *Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar* (İstanbul: Ensar Neşriyat, 2004), 11.

knowledge such as the Quran, the Sunnah, unveiling (kashf), and the understanding of the unseen (ilm-i ladun) to address these topics. As Sufism emerged as a grassroots movement, Sufi lodges (tekkes) and other Sufi institutions, which bring together people from all social classes, serve as significant sociological organisations. Furthermore, Sufism, aiming to develop individual spiritual maturity, is also related to psychology and educational sciences. Sufi lodges provide an environment that nurtures individuals' unique abilities and capacities. By tempering human needs and desires, Sufism has positively impacted economic life.

The author then discusses Sufism and the fine arts. Prayers, hymns, poems praising God, supplications, hymns, devotional chants, litanies, remembrance (zikr), and eulogies constitute the subject matter of Sufi literature, giving rise to a rich tradition of lodge literature. Sufism, with its institutions such as lodges (tekke), hospices (hankah), and shrines (âsitâne), has contributed to the development of a new architectural understanding. Moreover, Sufism and Sufis' engagement in spiritual dance (semâ) have fostered a close relationship with music.

In the second chapter, the author discusses the history of Sufism. Sufism History, also known as the study that examines the emergence of institutions, prominent scholars, orders, and their founders, and the relationship of Sufism with other Islamic institutions throughout its historical development.³

The author here focuses on the sources of Sufi history, known as "sufî tabakât". These include works such as "Tabakâ-tu's-Sufiyye" by Abû Abdurrahman al-Sülemî, "Hilyetü'l-evliyâ" and "Tabakâtu'l-asfiyâ" by Abû Nuaym al-Isfahânî, "Sıfatu's-safve" by Ibn al-Jawzî, "Tazkirat al-Awliya" by Farid al-Din al-Attar, "Tabakaâtul awliya" by Ibn al-Mulakkın, "Nefehâtü'l-üns" by Abdurrahman al-Jâmi, "Tabakâtu'l-havâs" by Zebîdî, "et-Tabakâtu'l Kübrâ" by Sha'rani, "el-Kevâkibu'd-durriyye" by Mûnâvî, "Câmiu kerâmâti'l-evliyâ" by Nebhânî, and "Cemheretü'l-evliyâ" by Menûfî.

In this section, the author divides Sufism history into three periods. The first period is the Period of Asceticism (zuhd). This period encompasses the era beginning with the time of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the generation following the Companions (Tabi'in), and the generation following them (Tabi' al-Tabi'in), covering the first two centuries of Islam. The second period is the Period of Sufism. This period spans approximately three to three and a half centuries, from the end of the second century of the Islamic calendar to the emergence of the Sufi orders. The third period is the Period of Sufi Orders. This period begins around the sixth century of the Islamic calendar and continues to the present day.

³ Yılmaz, *Ana Hatlarıyla Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar*, 75.

The author then discusses the leading ascetic schools up to the end of the second century of the Islamic calendar. The author describes the Medina School (Sunnah and Hadith). It is the school where the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the Rightly Guided Caliphs, the Companions, and the inhabitants of Suffa provided the finest examples of ascetic life. The author describes the Basra School: (Fear, sorrow, love) Fear and sorrow are predominant in Hasan al-Basri, while love prevails in Rabi'a al-Adawiyya. It has been the centre of an ascetic life devoid of politics. The author describes the Kufa School (Sufism) After the martyrdom of Imam Hussain; it is also known as the School of Repenters (Bekka'un, Tevvabun) due to remorse. Famous Sufis such as Sufyan al-Sawri and Dawud al-Ta'i emerged from this school. The author describes the Khurasan School (Trust in God). Famous Sufis such as Ibrahim ibn Adham, Fudayl ibn Iyad, and Shaqiq al-Balkhi hailed from this school.

The author then discusses the Sufi schools in the 3rd and 4th centuries of the Islamic calendar. The author describes the Nishapur School: Chivalry (futuwwa) and asceticism (mellamet) are prevailing concepts. One of the prominent Sufis from this region, Bayazid Bistami, was known for his ecstatic utterances and audacious style. Hamdun Qassar, on the other hand, embraced the concept of asceticism more prominently. The author then describes the School of Egypt: Knowledge (ma'rifah) and love (muhabbah) are prevailing concepts. The most renowned Sufi of this school is Zunnun Misri. The author describes the School of Damascus: It excelled in fasting and nocturnal worship. Abu Sulayman al-Darani and his disciples are among its most important representatives. Lastly, the author discusses the School of Baghdad, centring around monotheism (tawhid) and love (ishq). Notable Sufis from this school include Bishr al-Hafi, Junayd Baghdadi, Sari al-Saqati, and Harith al-Muhasibi.

In the 3rd and 4th centuries of the Islamic calendar, the Sufi paths were represented by ten legitimate orders, namely Muhâsibiyya, Kassâriyya, Tayfûriyya, Cüneydiyya, Nûriyya, Sehliyya, Hakîmiyya, Harrâziyya, Hafifiyya, and Seyyâriyya. Additionally, there were two false sects known as Hallâciyya and Hulûliyya.

At the end of the second chapter, the author discusses the Era of Orders (Tarikat Dönemi). The 12th and subsequent centuries marked the institutionalisation of Sufism in the form of orders. Orders such as Kubrawiyya, Suhrawardiyya, Akbariyya, Shadhiliyya, and Mevleviyya stand out as the initial Sufi institutions. Figures like Ahmed Yesevi, Haji Bektash Veli, and Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi are prominent personalities of the era of orders. The sixteenth century witnessed the completion of the establishment and literary works of all orders. The concept of "unity of being" (Waḥdat al-wujūd) became widespread in the Ottoman Empire. By the nineteenth century, tekkes (Sufi lodges) began to decline, and unqualified individuals joined

the orders. The process, which started with the closure of Bektashi tekkes, entered a new phase with the declaration of the Republic of Türkiye.

In the third chapter, the author discusses the concepts of Sufism.⁴ Within this section, the author includes a subsection titled “Concepts Related to Worship and Morality.” In this subsection, various concepts related to worship and morality are elucidated. Worship, which encompasses every action directed towards the pleasure of Allah, is described. Taqwa, which denotes purifying the heart from sins, is discussed. Vera, interpreted as abstaining from doubtful matters, and tevbe, signifying repentance from sin and turning towards Allah, is also expounded upon. Inabe, expressing the genuine rush towards Allah without worldly attachments, and zikir, signifying the remembrance of Allah to prevent forgetfulness, are explained. Murakabe, reflecting the consciousness of Allah’s omniscience and vigilance over everything, and itmam’an, representing the tranquillity and contentment of the heart, are also delineated. Sıdk, embodying sincerity and purity of heart, and ihlas, denoting the sincerity of worship directed solely to Allah, are discussed. Sabr entails enduring trials and tribulations without complaint, and Tawakkul, the concept of relying on and trusting in Allah after conforming one’s actions to divine and natural laws, is examined. Shukr, indicating gratitude towards the bestower of blessings and utilising them in the direction shown by Allah, and rıza, signifying the unquestioning submission of the servant before the divine decree, are elucidated. Fakr, representing the absence of self-perception within the servant, and zuhd, indicating detachment from worldly possessions and lack of attachment to them, are discussed. Kanaat, representing contentment and satisfaction with what Allah has provided, and istikamet, denoting steadfastness and adherence to the commandments of Allah, are the final concepts expounded upon.

The author then discusses the concepts of seyr-u suluk (spiritual journey and progress). Within the context of Sufism, the author explains the following terms that the disciple encounters during the stages of the spiritual journey until completing the spiritual stations: Sheikh, guide (mürşid), disciple (mürid), wayfarer (sâlik), allegiance (bey’at), spiritual concert (semâ), ritual practices (âyin), spiritual gathering (sohbet), spiritual struggle and ascetic practices (mücahede ve riyâzat), fasting and moderate eating, reduced sleep, minimal speech, solitude and self-mortification (halvet ve çile), seclusion (celvet), the knower (ârif), saint (velî), and saintly rank (velâyet).

⁴ Yılmaz, *Ana Hatlarıyla Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar*, 156.

The author introduces a section titled “Concepts Related to Realisation (Tahakkuk)”, where they discuss aspects of realisation within Sufism. The dimension of realisation in Sufism is related to the state of being attained due to the spiritual journey. These aspects are further divided into two categories: those about the heart and conscience. The author discusses states such as ecstasy (vecd) and absorption (istiğrak), which denote heightened emotional states, as well as ecstatic absorption (cezbe), arising from the attraction of the servant to the Divine. Love and affection (aşk ve muhabbet), fear and hope (havf ve recâ), contraction and expansion (kabz ve bast), awe-inspiring reverence (heybet), intimacy (üns), tranquility (gaybet), elimination of bad habits (mahv), establishment of worship in their place (isbat), spiritual intoxication (sekr), and wakefulness (sahv) are among the concepts discussed. Additionally, profound Sufi concepts such as annihilation and subsistence (fena ve beka), unity and differentiation (cem’ ve fark) are elucidated within this framework.

Secondly, the author discusses the concepts of knowledge and gnosis (ma’rifet). Gnosis, enlightenment (Irfan), certainty (yakîn), unveiling and unveiling of mysteries (keşf ve mükaşefe), inspiration (ilham), spiritual presence and witnessing (muhâdara ve müşâhede), conquest (feth), spiritual influx (feyz), spiritual inspirations (levâih), spiritual phenomena (tavârik), spiritual states (levâmi), divine manifestations (tecelli), spiritual experiences (vâridat ve havâtır), and spiritual occurrences (vâkıa) are introduced as fundamental concepts in understanding the issue of knowledge in Sufism.

In the fourth chapter, the author discusses the institutions of Sufism. The Sufi orders have outlined their methods and principles to dominate the spirit and enslave the ego in two main ways: spiritual orders and worldly orders. The major Sufi orders are introduced after explaining these two categories of paths and methods. The main Sufi orders and their founders are as follows: Qadiriyya by ‘Abd al-Qâdir al-Jîlânî, Yasawiyya by Ahmed Yesevi, Rifa’iyya by Ahmed Rifai, Suhrawardiyya by Abu Hafs Umar Suhrawardi, Chishtiyya by Muinuddin Hasan Chishti⁵, Shadhiliyya by Abu’l-Hasan al-Shadhili, Bektashiyya by Haji Bektash Veli, Mevleviyya by Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi, Badawiyya by Ahmed al-Badawi, Desuqiyya by Ibrahim ibn Abi al-Majd Desuki, Naqshbandiyya by Muhammad Bahauddin Naqshband Bukhari, Khalwatiyya by Abu Abdullah Sirajuddin Umar bin Ekmeluddin Khalwati and Bayramiyya by Haji Bayram Veli. After introducing the major Sufi orders, the chapter

⁵ Vahit Göktaş, and Saeyd Rashed Hasan Chowdury, "An Evaluation of Mu'in al-Din Chishti's Sufi Influences in the Indian Subcontinent: The Case of Chishti Tariqa," *Şırnak Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 31 (2023), 47-76.

concludes with brief information on the functioning of Sufi institutions such as tekkes and zawiyas, as well as the principles of chivalry (futuwwa) and guilds (akhlaq) that reflect this in life.⁶

In the fifth chapter, the author discusses Sufi issues. Sufism deals with its unique problems and issues. This final section examines Sufi issues in two parts: thought and practical. In Sufi thought, the principle of “Unity of Existence” is expressed in various terms but remains fundamental. At times, it is articulated as “Tawhid al-Kusud,” which signifies the unity of the will of God with the will of the servant; at other times, it is referred to as “Tawhid al-Wujud,” meaning the unity of existence; and sometimes it is described as “Tawhid al-Shuhud,” indicating the perception of only the One. Although these principles are often attributed to Ibn Arabi and Imam Rabbani⁷, the early Sufi master Junayd al-Baghdadi interpreted “Tawhid” as the servant being like a shadow or a shade in the presence of God. Concepts such as “Union” (Cem) and “Annihilation in God” (Fenafillah) are rooted in this principle.⁸

In the first part, Sufi thought addresses concepts related to existence, knowledge, and human beings, such as unity of existence (Waḥdat al-wujūd), unity of witnessing (waḥdat al-shuhūd), heart, soul, ego, and intellect, providing the reader with comprehensive insights.

The author explains the concept of Unity of Existence (Waḥdat al-wujūd): Existence is one and consists solely of the essence of the Divine. Apart from this, there is no actual existence or independent entity “existing by itself.” In other words, the existence of things is akin to the existence of shadows; just as shadows cannot exist without objects, the existence of things cannot be conceived without the existence of the Divine. This knowledge is attained through ascetic practices, spiritual elevation, and mystical experience, and it cannot be comprehended through reason alone. Ghazali expressed this concept as “La mevcude illa hu” or “There is no existence but Him,” denoting an unnamed unity of existence. Ibn Arabi, who purported to have systematised the concept of Unity of Existence, did not use this term; rather, the term emerged after him.⁹

Some have mistakenly equated Unity of Existence with pantheism, claiming they are the same. However, in pantheistic thought, God and the world are considered one entity, with

⁶ Yılmaz, *Ana Hatlarıyla Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar*, 240.

⁷ Saeyd Rashed Hasan Chowdury, and Vahit Göktaş, "A Critical Analysis of Imam Rabbani Ahmad Sirhindi's Doctrines on Sufism," *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam* 11, no. 1 (2021), 93-121.

⁸ Yılmaz, *Ana Hatlarıyla Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar*, 283.

⁹ Yılmaz, *Ana Hatlarıyla Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar*, 285.

God comprising all existing things, often explained as nature. This perspective aligns with materialism and the positivist approach. Unity of Existence and pantheism can be likened to two separate glasses filled with seawater and fresh spring water. From a distance, it is challenging to discern seawater and spring water; this distinction can only be made through tasting.

The author then discusses the concept of Unity of Witnessing (*waḥdat al-shuhūd*). This concept was systematised by Imam Rabbani, who criticised Ibn Arabi's understanding of the unity of existence and presented this alternative perspective. Unity of Witnessing occurs when, through worship, obedience, and ascetic practices, divine love and affection overwhelm the servant, resulting in ecstasy and absorption. In this state, known as "fana" (annihilation) and "cem" (unity), the seeker experiences the sensation of being completely absorbed in divine presence. Attaining this state, the seeker sees nothing but the manifestation of God; the material world fades from their sight, and they perceive only the One. Imam Rabbani illustrates this by likening it to the inability of a person who sees sunlight to perceive stars. When sunlight is present, the stars are no longer visible but have ceased to exist.¹⁰

The second part addresses practical Sufism, addressing intriguing concepts such as miracles (*karamat*), dreams, the saints of the unseen world (*rijal al-ghayb*), spiritual lineage (*silsila*), authorisation (*ijazah*), seeking help (*istimdad*), intercession (*tawassul*), spiritual attention (*tawajjuh*), and spiritual connection (*rabita*), concluding the chapter understandably. This final section, which includes concepts shedding light on the contemporary issues facing Sufism, is meticulously examined to dispel any doubts in readers' minds.

Hasan Kâmil Yılmaz has beautifully depicted the "portrait of Sufism" from the past to the present. The book is of the quality to be used as a textbook in faculties of theology. Additionally, it is a work that individuals interested in the subject can acquire and read to gain knowledge. The author addresses contemporary Sufi issues and answers criticisms raised, accustomed to addressing questions in readers' minds. In short, the book has achieved its purpose of writing and significantly contributed to the field.

¹⁰ Yılmaz, *Ana Hatlarıyla Tasavvuf ve Tarikatlar*, 298.

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