



The Role of History in The Research on Sufism

Khatamov Tokhir Abdumutalovich

PhD, Associate Professor at the "Chair for the Study of Islamic History and Source Studies IRCICA", International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.47134/diksima.v2i3.190>

*Correspondence: Khatamov Tokhir
Abdumutalovich

Email: tokhirkhatamov@gmail.com

Received: 10-05-2025

Accepted: 06-06-2025

Published: 07-07-2025



Copyright: © 2025 by the authors.
Submitted for possible open access
publication under the terms and
conditions of the Creative Commons
Attribution (BY SA) license
(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Abstract: In recent years, as a result of reforms in the field of science and education in our country, opportunities for studying the teachings of Sufism in the fields of history and Islamic studies have been expanding. Sufism is an amazing spiritual and cultural phenomenon of Islam, which was studied by individual Christian researchers who found themselves in the Muslim world, observing the lifestyle, ritual practices, beliefs of fakirs, dervishes, and feasts. This article analyzes the scientific study of Sufi teachings from the perspective of history and Islamic studies during the years of independence. Additionally, it provides scientific and historical conclusions on the methods of source criticism, historical processes, and the analysis of periods in research studies.

Keywords: Islam, Sufism, Dissertations, Islamic Studies, Historiography, Source Criticism, Specialization, Scientific Research

Introduction

History is considered one of the most essential branches of science in the study of Sufism. History provides initial conclusions on all past civilizations, including their economic-political, social-cultural processes, and development or decline.

Although Sufism is a teaching aimed at improving human spirituality, character, and ethics, it cannot exist in isolation from historical processes. In this regard, the stages of the formation and development of Sufi orders, famous Sufis, and sources of Sufism are primarily studied by historians or other specialists from a historical perspective. These studies provide initial insights for researchers from various fields wishing to study Sufi teachings.

According to tradition, Sufism is defined as an ascetic and mystical trend in Islam that establishes a special relationship between the Almighty and the believer created by him. There is no unambiguous interpretation of the term "Sufism" in the scientific Islamic literature, and there are many interpretations of it.

Methodology

Among the researchers studying Sufism in the early years of independence, the share of historians is high. During this period, R.A. Tillabaev's doctoral dissertation on the topic "Central Asian hagiographic works of the XV-XVI centuries. As a historical source (Life of

the sheikhs of the Naqshbandiyya Order)" in the specialty 07.00.09 – "History, source studies and methods of historical research" in 1994 was the first successfully defended research work on the history of Sufism.

R.A. Tillabaev devotes a separate chapter in his research work to the emergence and spread of the Naqshbandiyya order around the world, in particular to India. Along with presenting an analysis of political and socio-economic processes in Central Asia based on hagiographic works, he also shows the important source value of hagiographic works. It also pays attention to the study of the Naqshbandi order and historiography. In terms of historiography, it mainly presents the research of Russian historians, but also partially emphasizes the scientific research of local historians.

At this point, it is important to note that in the research work conducted on the study of Sufi teachings during the former Soviet Union, the schools of the order were analyzed mainly based on a negative approach. Only in the order of Khoja Ahmad Yassawi, the specific issue of the abandoned world was exaggerated beyond the norm, Divine Love in the poetry of Alisher Navoi was denied, and the image of the false Guli was brought to the forefront [3:27-37], historical fabrications and lies about Khoja Ahrar Vali's participation in organizing various conspiracies against Mirzo Ulugbek were forcibly instilled into the minds of our people.

Such cases indicate that during the period of the authoritarian regime, the most necessary conditions for the development of social and humanitarian sciences, namely, scientific and creative freedom, were limited and prohibited, communist ideology penetrated all fields of science, and theology was studied one-sidedly in an atheistic form. Unfortunately, these terrible historical processes, persecution, exile and repression that took place in the 20th century were carried out against our Uzbek people.

In the 1996 candidate dissertation "Political activity of Naqshbandi sheikhs in Maverannahr (I half of the 16th century)" by B.M. Babadzhanov, the participation of Naqshbandi sheikhs in the political processes that took place in Maverannahr in the 15th-16th centuries is described. In particular, the attitude of the Naqshbandi doctrine to political processes and the relations of Muhammad Shaybani Khan with the Naqshbandi sheikhs. The role of Makhdumi Azam in political life and the integration of representatives of the Naqshbandi order into political life, the rise of their positions, and their relations with the Shaybani were studied.

At the same time, the relations of Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur with the Naqshbandi sheikhs were also covered. The historical services of Makhdumi Azam in eliminating the conflicts between the Shaybani khans were studied.

A comprehensive study of the emergence, formation, and stages of development of Central Asian Sufi orders can be seen in E.E. Karimov's doctoral dissertation on history, defended in 1998 on the topic "Sufi orders in Central Asia XII-XV centuries." 07.00.02 - "National history".

In his dissertation, E.E. Karimov also touches upon a number of problems in the study of sources important for the study of the topic and in the study of Sufi orders. Analyzing the spread of Islam and the emergence of Sufi orders in Central Asia, he studies the influence of the Yasawi order on the Sufi traditions of the peoples of the region, and sheds light on the state of the Naqshbandi order's achievement of a high position during the Timurid era.

Since most of the sources used by the researcher have not been sufficiently studied and published, as a result of which some sources are being introduced into scientific use for the first time, he is forced to include a separate chapter on the problems of studying sources. Of course, it is correct to emphasize this situation as a pressing problem in the early years of independence, and we can explain this situation by the lack of qualified specialists working with manuscript sources, which are gradually finding their solution today. Z.A. Kutibaev's 1998 doctoral dissertation on the topic "Khoja Ubaidullah Ahrar and his role in the socio-political and spiritual life of Transoxiana in the 15th century" not only highlights the great services of Khoja Ahrar Vali in the development of Sufi teachings, but also scientifically refutes various unfounded slanders in scientific studies devoted to the study of the life of Khoja Ubaidullah Ahrar during the former USSR, and reveals his historical services as a patron of science and enlightenment and a people-loving Sufi.

M.S. Razakova's PhD dissertation on the topic "The scientific heritage of Yaqub Charkhi and his role in the development of the Naqshbandi order (XIV-XV centuries)" [8:2] studies the life and work of Mawlana Yaqub Charkhi, his works on tafsir and jurisprudence, and separately studies the issues of Sufism and ethics, as well as the work "Risola dar manaqib va aqid". B.B. Mallaboev's PhD dissertation on the topic "Czarism's policy of endowment property in Turkestan (on the example of the endowment property of the descendants of Khoja Ahror)" provides an analysis of the endowment property and its condition in Turkestan in the second half of the 19th century, as well as the historiography and source study of the topic. It also separately examines the impact of the colonial administration's agrarian policy on waqf properties, critical conclusions on changes in the system of land-water relations, and the dissatisfaction of scholars with the policy of waqf properties. The main object of the dissertation, the inspection of the waqf properties of the descendants of Khoja Ahror by the colonial government and the processes related to the liquidation of these waqf properties, are studied, and scientific results are presented.

I.S. Usmanov's candidate thesis in history on the topic "Al-Hakim At-Tirmidhi's "Navodir al-usul" is an important source for the science of hadith and mysticism" is the first defense dedicated to the study of the doctrine of mysticism in the specialty "24.00.02 - Islamic history and source studies". The dissertation study examines the life, work, scientific and educational heritage of Al-Hakim At-Tirmidhi, his teachers, students, and the Sufi environment of that time. The study also examines the role of Al-Hakim At-Tirmidhi's work "Navodir al-Usul" as a source of hadith science, and the role of hadiths in the "Hakimiya" order. The significance of Al-Hakim At-Tirmidhi's scientific and educational heritage in the formation of the Naqshbandi doctrine is also revealed.

Result and Discussion

It is believed that the first Sufis were poor people deprived of even basic means of physical existence, leading an ascetic lifestyle, preferring prayers, alms to a specific work activity, or living off their own labor, but at the same time not allowing the use of other people's labor. All researchers of Sufism or Tasawwuf recognize that its content is as vast as the ocean, and therefore there is no holistic understanding of it, and each definition is just a characteristic of a specific property of this phenomenon.

Researcher N.O.Khidirova successfully defended her candidate's dissertation on the topic "The place and role of Khoja Muhammad Porso in the development of the Khojagon-Naqshbandi order (late 14th century - early 15th century)" in 2006. In the research work conducted by the doctoral candidate, an analysis of historical sources on the life and activities of Khoja Muhammad Porso was carried out, and historical-biographical works were studied. In addition, the issue of monotheism of Allah and remembrance in the works of Khoja Muhammad Porso was separately studied. A number of issues, such as the influence of Khoja Muhammad Porso on the development of the Khojagon-Naqshbandi order and his place in Bukhara society, were studied, and scientific conclusions were given.

M.M. Ismailov's dissertation on the topic "Sheikh Khudoydod's work 'Bahr al-Ulum' is an important source for the history of Sufism in Central Asia (second half of the 18th century)" provides an analysis of the processes in the socio-political and cultural-spiritual life of Central Asia in the second half of the 18th century. It also conducts research on Sheikh Khudaiddod Vali's work "Bahr al-Ulum" and its sources, provides an analysis of the work's general content, reveals the work's significance as a commentary on Shihabuddin al-Suhrawardi's work "Irshad al-Muridin", and presents the novelties identified from the point of view of source studies in the work's information on representatives of Sufism in Transoxiana and Khorasan, the history and source foundations of Sufism, and the Yassawiyya order.

H. Turaev's dissertation on the topic "The role of the Joibar khajas in the socio-political and spiritual-cultural life of the Bukhara Khanate in the 16th-17th centuries" sheds light on the important importance of the historiography of the Joibar khajas' family, including such works as "Ravzat ar-rizvan", "Manaqibi sa'daiyya", "Matlab at-talibin", "Abdullanom" in studying the history of the Joibar khajas. The role of the Joibar khajas in the socio-political and spiritual-cultural life of the Bukhara Khanate in the 16th century and their position in the 17th century were scientifically studied.

In studying the development of the Naqshbandi order in later periods, we can especially highlight the scientific research work of Kh. Yuldashkhodjaev on the topic "The role of Musakhan Dahbidi in the development of the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi order (XVIII century)".

The activities of representatives of Sufism in the socio-cultural and religious processes in Central Asia in the 18th-19th centuries, the role of Musakhan Dahbidi in the development of the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi order, and his theoretical heritage were studied. In particular, the history of Sufism, the doctrine of "Wahdat ul-Wujud", and the coverage of issues related to the practice of dhikr in the works of Musakhan Dahbidi were scientifically studied.

Among the young scholars who have studied the sources of Sufism in the field of history, K. Rakhimov's dissertation for his PhD in history entitled "Mustamlī Bukhari's 'Sharh at-Ta'arruf' and its influence on the sources of Sufism in Transoxiana and Khorasan in the 11th-15th centuries" analyzes the life and work of Mustamli Bukhari, the work "Sharh at-Ta'arruf" and its study, structure, and sources, revealing the importance of the work as an important source on Sufism, and also studying aspects such as the history, definition,

and essence of Sufism in the work, a description of the foundations of Sufism, and the hagiography of Sufis. The influence of the work on such historical sources as "Risalah Qushayriya", "Kashf ul-mahjub", "Tazkirat ul-awliyo", "Fasl ul-khitab", "Nafahot ul-uns", "Nasayim ul-muhabbat" was also studied. In the scientific research work conducted by K. Rakhimov for the degree of Doctor of Historical Sciences DSc on the topic "The Roots and Sources of Formation of the Khojagon-Naqshbandi Doctrine (IX–XIV Centuries)", the conditions for the emergence and spread of Sufism in the Islamic world in the VIII–XI centuries, various Sufi orders and their periodic boundaries, the significant role of Central Asia in the development of Sufism, the main currents, environments, representatives and ideas of the Sufi school (IX–XI centuries) were analyzed. Also, the historical factors that formed the basis for the emergence of the Khojagon-Naqshbandi order and the importance of the vast experience, tradition and scientific and educational heritage of Sufi teachings in the Muslim world were studied, and scientific conclusions were drawn.

A. Kandaharov's scientific research on the topic "The role of Karmana sheikhs in socio-political and spiritual life in the 16th century", dedicated to revealing the role of Sufi orders in socio-political and spiritual life of the 16th century, is also of great importance.

The study scientifically investigated such aspects as socio-political and cultural processes in the 16th century Bukhara Khanate, the role and influence of Karmana sheikhs in the socio-political life of the khanate, and the importance of the historical heritage of Karmana sheikhs in studying the spiritual environment of the 16th century. In particular, Sheikh Khudoidad Vali, Kasim Sheikh Azizon and their scientific and educational heritage were studied.

Conclusion

As a conclusion to this study, we can say that scientific research aimed at studying the doctrine of Sufism in the field of history has covered a very wide range. We can also see confirmation of this idea in the scientific results and conclusions in the dissertations and abstracts of researchers. It is true that no science has the opportunity to develop independently of other sciences, that is, separately, and the science of history also carries out cooperative relations with historical sciences and other sciences that assist in the study of the doctrine of Sufism.

During the years of independence, we see that the doctrine of Sufism has been studied within the framework of such disciplines as history, philosophy, philology, Islamic studies, pedagogy, and psychology. Based on the scientific research carried out within the framework of these disciplines, we can say that it is necessary to carry out many more research works on the doctrine of Sufism in the near future, because in our opinion, the level of its study is very small compared to the scope of the doctrine.

Because, as one of the most effective ways to resist various changes and degradations in human morality in the 21st century, communicating, explaining, promoting and setting an example for this teaching to our nation and the peoples of the world in a broader form is one of the most pressing issues facing scholars, intellectuals and Sufis today.

References

- A.H. Qandahorov. "The role of the Carmanā sheikhs in the social-political and spiritual life in the 16th century." Doctor of Philosophy dissertation abstract in History. – Tashkent: 2018. – p. 51.
- Amrani, A. El (2023). Desecularising the postcolonial resistance: the role of Islamic spirituality in the framing of Moroccan anticolonial thought. *Journal of North African Studies*, 28(5), 1240-1264, ISSN 1362-9387, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2021.1975272>
- B.B. Mallaboyev. "The policy of waqf landholding in Turkestan (the case of the waqf properties of Khoja Akhror's descendants)." History Ph.D. dissertation. – Namangan: 2004. – p. 2.
- B.M. Babajanov. Political activity of Naqshbandi sheikhs in Maverrannahr. (First half of the 15th century): Candidate of historical sciences dissertation. – Tashkent: 1996. – 171 p.
- Bobomurod Erali. Sultan of poets. – Tashkent: 2023. – pp. 27-37.
- E.E. Karimov. The role, place, and social positions of the clergy in Maverrannahr in the 15th century: Abstract of the candidate of historical sciences dissertation. – Tashkent: 1990. – 22 p.
- Erturk, O.F. (2022). The Myth of Turkish Islam: the influence of Naqshbandi-Gümüşhanevi thought in Turkish Islamic orthodoxy. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 49(2), 223-247, ISSN 1353-0194, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2020.1782727>
- Fisher, N.E. (2022). Flavors of Ecstasy: States of Absorption in Islamic and Jewish Contemplative Traditions. *Religions*, 13(10), ISSN 2077-1444, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13100935>
- H. To'rayev. "The role of the Juybor Khojas in the social-political and spiritual-cultural life of the Bukhara Khanate in the 16th-17th centuries." Doctoral dissertation in history. – Tashkent: 2007. – p. 2.
- I.S. Usmanov. "Al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi's 'Nawadir al-usul' as a significant source for the study of hadith and Sufism." History Ph.D. dissertation. – Tashkent: 2005. – p. 2.
- Irawan, B. (2022). Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), Sufism and environmental conservation practices in Indonesia. *HTS Theologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 78(4), ISSN 0259-9422, <https://doi.org/10.4102/HTS.V78I4.7073>
- K.R. Rahimov. "Mustamli Bukhari's 'Sharh at-ta'arruf' and its influence on the Sufi sources of Maverrannahr and Khurasan in the 11th-15th centuries." Doctor of Philosophy dissertation abstract in History. – Tashkent: 2018. – p. 54.

- K.R. Rahimov. "Roots and sources of the Khojagon-Naqshbandiya teachings (9th-14th centuries)." Doctor of Science dissertation abstract. – Tashkent: 2022. – p. 74.
- Kh.Kh. Yuldashkhodjaev. "The role of Musakhon Dahbidi in the development of the Naqshbandiya-Mujaddidiya order (18th century)." History Ph.D. dissertation abstract. – Tashkent: 2008. – p. 27.
- M.M. Ismoilov. "Sheikh Khudoydod's 'Bahr al-ulum' as an important source for the history of Sufism in Central Asia (second half of the 18th century)." History Ph.D. dissertation. – Tashkent: 2006. – p. 2.
- M.S. Razoqova. "The scientific heritage of Ya'qub Charhi and his role in the development of the Naqshbandi order (14th-15th centuries)." History Ph.D. dissertation abstract. – Tashkent: 2001. – p. 2.
- N.Y. Khidirova. "Khoja Muhammad Porso's role in the development of the Khojagon-Naqshbandiya order (late 14th – early 15th centuries)." History Ph.D. dissertation. – Tashkent: 2006. – p. 2.
- Piraino, F. (2023). 'Islamic humanism': another form of universalism in contemporary Sufism. *Religion*, 53(2), 246-268, ISSN 0048-721X, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2022.2130836>
- Sadriddin Salim Bukhari. Tabarruk pilgrimage sites. – Tashkent: "Yozuvchi", 1993. – pp. 14-15.
- Subandi, M.A. (2022). Psychotherapeutic Dimensions of an Islamic-Sufi-Based Rehabilitation Center: A Case Study. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 46(2), 582-601, ISSN 0165-005X, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11013-021-09738-1>
- Tillaev R. Central Asian hagiographic works of the 15th-16th centuries as a historical source. (Lives of the sheikhs of the Naqshbandi order): Doctoral dissertation in historical sciences. – Tashkent: 1994. – 277 p.
- Uzbek Soviet Encyclopedia. Volume 12, Tashkent: 1979. – p. 412.
- Wright, Z. (2022). Islam, Blackness, and African Cultural Distinction: The Islamic Négritude of Shaykh Ibrāhīm Niasse. *Journal of Africana Religions*, 10(2), 237-265, ISSN 2165-5405, <https://doi.org/10.5325/jafireli.10.2.0237>
- Xavier, M.S. (2023). The dervishes of the north: Rumi, whirling, and the making of Sufism in Canada. *The Dervishes of the North: Rumi, Whirling, and the Making of Sufism in Canada*, 1-279
- Z.A. Qutiboyev. "Khoja Ubaydulloh Akhror and his role in the social-political and spiritual life of Maverannahr in the 15th century." Doctoral dissertation in history. – Tashkent: 1998. – p. 2.