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THE IMPACT OF SUFIS ON ACTIVATING THE JIHAD MOVEMENT AGAINST THE CRUSADERS DURING THE ERA OF SALADIN

O IMPACTO DOS SUFIS NA ATIVAÇÃO DO MOVIMENTO JIHAD CONTRA OS CRUZADOS DURANTE A ERA DE SALADIN

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Abstract
The concept of Sufism has been the subject of varying opinions, with diverse perspectives on its origins and historical development. Despite the criticisms leveled against Sufism by some scholars, its significant role in confronting external threats and calling Muslims to jihad cannot be denied. This study highlights the importance of Salah al-Din's engagement with Sufis and their role in encouraging people to resist the Crusaders. It also sheds light on Salah al-Din's notable efforts to support Sufis by establishing institutions for their benefit. The research begins by defining Sufism, exploring its early spread within Islamic civilization, examining the origins of the concept, and analyzing the reasons behind the Sufis' inclination towards seclusion. It further investigates their preference for residing in ribats (fortified structures on the frontiers established to protect Muslim borders) and the ways rulers, particularly during the Ayyubid era, utilized their influence. Additionally, the study examines prominent Sufi figures during Salah al-Din's time and discusses key Sufi institutions of the period, such as the Salahiyya Khanqah and the Khanqah of Sa'id al-Sa'da. The research concludes by presenting key findings, including Salah al-Din's strategic use of Sufis to confront the Crusader threat and their critical contribution to the spiritual preparation of Muslims, culminating in the liberation of Jerusalem.

Keywords: Salah Al-Din al-Ayyubi, Sufism, Crusades, Jerusalem, Khanqahs.

Resumo
O conceito de sufismo tem sido objeto de opiniões divergentes, com diversas perspectivas sobre suas origens e desenvolvimento histórico. Apesar das críticas dirigidas ao sufismo por alguns estudiosos, não se pode negar seu papel significativo no enfrentamento de ameaças externas e no chamado aos muçulmanos para a jihad. Este estudo destaca a importância do envolvimento de Salah al-Din com os sufistas e seu papel em incentivar as pessoas a resistir aos cruzados. Ele também esclarece os esforços notáveis de Salah al-Din para apoiar os sufistas, estabelecendo instituições para seu benefício. A pesquisa começa definindo o sufismo, explorando sua disseminação inicial na civilização islâmica, examinando as origens do conceito e analisando as razões por trás da inclinação dos sufistas para o isolamento. Além disso, investiga sua preferência por residir em ribats (estruturas fortificadas nas fronteiras estabelecidas para proteger as fronteiras muçulmanas) e as maneiras como os governantes, particularmente durante a era ayubida, utilizaram sua influência. Além disso, o estudo examina figuras sufistas proeminentes durante o tempo de Salah al-Din e discute instituições sufistas importantes do período, como a Salahiyya Khanqah e a Khanqah de Sa'id al-Sa'da. A pesquisa conclui apresentando as principais conclusões, incluindo o uso estratégico de Salah al-Din dos sufis para enfrentar a ameaça dos cruzados e sua contribuição crítica para a preparação espiritual dos muçulmanos, culminando na libertação de Jerusalém.

Palavras-chave: *Salah Al-Din al-Ayyubi. Sufismo. Cruzadas. Jerusalém. Khanqahs.*

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1 INTRODUCTION

The issue of Sufism has gained particular importance among researchers, with varying opinions among its scholars. Their perspectives on Sufism range from viewing it as an Islamic Sufism based on the Quran and Sunnah, with its roots in Islamic history, which became more prominent in the third century AH/ninth century AD due to the Islamic community's inclination towards worldly matters. This inclination drove many scholars towards a life of asceticism, isolation, and devotion to Allah. On the other hand, there is a view of Sufism influenced by Greek and Persian philosophies, Christian and Neoplatonic influences, which are distant from Islamic religion. Despite the contradictions surrounding Sufism, it was often a significant factor in encouraging people to engage in jihad, fostering a spirit of resistance and bravery, especially during the Crusades and the attacks launched by the Crusaders on the Islamic world.

1.1 Importance and objectives of the study

This study aims to highlight the role of the Sufis during the era of Salah al-Din (Saladin) and their contributions to promoting the jihad movement against the Crusaders. The research will also shed light on the most famous Sufi scholars during Salah al-Din's time and the most notable Sufi khanqahs (monastic complexes) of that era.

The study's question revolves around understanding the role played by the Sufis in jihad attempts against the Crusaders. It seeks to determine whether they were able to assist the rulers in mobilizing significant human resources to serve their goals and achieve victory. Additionally, it examines whether the Sufis participated in the fighting ranks or were merely theorists. The study also explores whether their efforts combined with Salah al-Din in combating Shi'ism, to prepare the ground for Salah al-Din to control the Levant and Egypt, and unite the Islamic world to face the impending Crusader threat to the Islamic nation.

2 DEFINING ISLAMIC SUFISM

Sufism is considered one of the Islamic sciences that played a role and had a presence in Islamic civilization. Various definitions of Sufism exist, one of which is that

the essence of Sufism is seclusion for worship, devotion to Allah, and distancing from the adornments and distractions of the world. It involves withdrawing from people to dedicate oneself to solitude and worship. This trend emerged as the Islamic community inclined towards worldly matters during the second century and beyond, leading people to become engrossed in worldly pursuits. Consequently, those devoted to worship were termed Sufis (Ibn Khaldun, n.d, p. 390), especially after the expansion of Muslim conquests and the increase in their spoils, which led many to incline towards worldly pleasures. This inclination provoked a state of internal revolution among the pious Muslims, characterized by a struggle between a still-fresh and strong faith and the world's allurements. The only resolution to this predicament was to flee from life's pleasures, disciplining the soul, and striving for obedience. Ascetics among them sought to understand the mysteries of the unseen and the resulting knowledge and perceptions (Afifi, n.d,, pp. 65-66). Asceticism and dedication to worship engage a person in discovering the secrets of Allah in matters of this world and the Hereafter. Through seclusion and choosing isolation, they sought to perpetuate their thoughts and solidify their knowledge in their hearts, to live a good life and taste the sweetness of divine knowledge (Al-Ghazali, 2005, pp. 2/274-275).

Some attributed Sufism to the wearing of wool, as it was a distinctive characteristic of Sufis who chose woolen garments to distinguish themselves from those wearing luxurious clothes (Ibn Khaldun, n.d, p. 390). Others said Sufism was derived from the attributes[1] of the Prophet Muhammad. Some traced it back to purity, while others derived it from the notion of being in the front row, signifying their hearts being in the foremost presence with Allah (Al-Maqrizi, 199, 4/280 ; Schimmel, 2006, P.19). However, this approach to Sufism underwent changes, especially after non-Arab elements entered Islam. These civilizations, with their philosophies, blended with Islamic Sufism. What was once true Islamic spiritual life, focusing on purifying the soul and cleansing the heart, transformed into the knowledge of inner matters and eventually into a spiritual philosophy drawing from various sources such as Indian, Persian, Greek, and Christian traditions (Rizk, 1997, p. 40).During the Abbasid era, and with their interactions with other elements, Zoroastrian and Manichaean influences emerged, given their prevalence in many parts of

[1] Ahl al-Suffa: It refers to the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) who stayed at the back of the Prophet's Mosque in Medina. This place was a shelter for poor Muslims who had no place to stay. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Ahl al-Suffa and Their Conditions*, edited by Magdi Fathi El-Sayed, Cairo: Dar al-Sahaba for Heritage in Tanta, 1990, P.18.

the near and Middle East. More than one Sufi was accused of Manichaeism, and Sufi legends mentioned Sufis and monks living in Iraq and Mount Lebanon (Schimmel, 2006, pp. 42-44). This was termed "foreign asceticism," influenced by the aforementioned legacies, in addition to being influenced by Neo-Platonic ideas and Gnostic heritage, known as "the philosophy of Gnosis[2], (Zakkar & Kharboutl, 2006, p. 263).

Scholars emphasized the significance and virtue of Jihad, encouraging devout individuals to guard the frontiers to protect Muslim borders from enemies. Sufis were found in various segments of society, with many ascetics and Sufis residing in border regions with the Byzantines. Their piety and asceticism contributed to victories in battles against enemies, and their role in Jihad led to the prominence of many of their names (Green, 2017, pp. 48-49). What distinguished Arab asceticism was its Islamic spirit, represented by many scholars and pious individuals distancing themselves from worldly disputes.

Their establishment of ribats[3] (fortified monasteries) in border areas with Byzantium and other coastal regions, especially the Mediterranean, was primarily for jihad in the way of Allah, and for knowledge and learning. An example is the ribat in Beirut where Imam al-Awza'i (Zakkar & Kharboutl, 2006, pp. 362-363) resided. The spread of ribats along Byzantine frontiers mirrored their presence in the western Islamic world during the medieval period in Andalusia, North Africa, and south of the Sahara. These ribats served both as centers for jihad and places of worship, often featuring prayer niches (mihrabs). They functioned as religious institutions connected to the warrior-mujahideen on the Byzantine borders (Green, 2017, p. 89). The Sufis, known as "the young men of the frontiers," earned this title due to their prolonged stays in these ribats, which sometimes extended over long periods. (Al-Maqrizi , 1998, p. 2/427)

A prime example of asceticism moving beyond its secluded state within Sufism and contributing to confronting threats facing the Islamic world is what Nur al-Din did in

[2] Philosophy of Gnosis: In language, gnosis refers to knowledge and is derived from the root word 'arafa, which is synonymous with knowledge. Technically, it refers to a specific type of knowledge about Allah Almighty, His names, and attributes, and about existence. This knowledge is obtained through heartfelt witnessing rather than by reason or sensory experience and is achieved by removing obstacles and unveiling the veils from the heart. Fadi Nasser, *The Philosophy of Theoretical Gnosis* Beirut: Dar Al-Liwa, 1st edition, 2018, 31, 33.

[3] Al-Ribat: The term "ribat" and "murabata" originally referred to guarding enemy frontiers. The word originates from the practice of the two opposing sides tethering their horses at each other's borders, ready for the adversary. A ribat is derived from the stabling of horses, signifying their readiness against the enemy at specific frontiers. Ibn Manzur, Lisan al-Arab, edited by Abdullah Ali Al-Kabeer and others, Egypt: Dar Al-Maaref, n.d. p. 1561.

Damascus. He strengthened his relations and communications with reform schools in Baghdad, Harran, and the mountains of Hakkari. These connections continued with Salah al-Din, who, like Nur al-Din, gave significant attention to establishing schools of asceticism and their ribats. They built new branches and endowed them with waqfs (endowments) to enable these schools to carry out their responsibilities in spiritually guiding jihad in an effective manner (Al-Kilani, 2002, p. 247). Ibn Jubayr, in his travel accounts, noted the variety and abundance of Sufi centers in Damascus during the time of Nur al-Din Zangi, known as khanqahs. These centers were described as beautifully constructed, with water flowing through their corridors. The Sufis in the Levant lived like kings, free from worldly burdens and provisions, devoted solely to worship. Their khanqahs resembled palaces in their grandeur (Ibn Jubayr, 1955, p. 273). This illustrates the level of care and attention Sufis received during this period, and how the Canids and subsequently the Ayyubids treated them with great respect, housing them in luxurious places. This recognition stemmed from an understanding of the Sufis' close relationship with the common people and their ability to inspire and mobilize them in the fight against the enemies of Muslims, particularly the Crusaders.

3 THE ROLE OF SUFISM IN SHAPING THE ISLAMIC UNDERSTANDING OF JIHAD DURING THE ERA OF SALAH AL-DIN

The Levant (Bilad al-Sham) was notable for the widespread presence of Sufis throughout its regions. The area attracted many devout individuals from Iraq and Khorasan, in addition to the ascetics from the Levant itself. These individuals often resided in frontier areas adjacent to Byzantine territories. The Levant was renowned for its devotional and touristic sites, given their virtues, and for jihad tourism due to its proximity to Byzantine borders. There were various types of Sufis: the "Sufis of the frontiers" who stood guard during times of jihad, the teaching Sufis who lived among the people, and the devout Sufis who resided in remote and distant areas. Thus, Sufis were engaged in both the greater jihad (spiritual struggle) and the lesser jihad (Awad, 2013,, pp. 17-15) (physical struggle).

The Ayyubids facilitated the flourishing of Sufism by constructing special places to accommodate them. This encouraged the arrival of many Sufi sheikhs from the Maghreb and Iraq to Egypt, where they gained the allegiance of the general populace as

religious figures who did not contravene Islamic law. They played significant roles in Egyptian society, particularly in political and jihadist contexts. Their asceticism and piety did not hinder them; rather, they played a clear role in enabling the Ayyubids to secure their internal stability and in supporting and strengthening the foundations of the Ayyubid state in its early stages.

Moreover, they had an active role in confronting the Crusader invasions. They participated in combat, motivated the fighters, and encouraged them towards jihad and martyrdom throughout the Crusades (Muhammad & Abed Hussein, 2015,, p. 117). Even al-Qalqashandi noted Salah al-Din's role in paying attention to the khanqahs (Sufi lodges), which were considered places for Sufis, stating: "As for the khanqahs and ribats, they were unknown in the Egyptian lands before the Ayyubid state, and Salah al-Din was the one who initiated them." (Al-Qalqashandi , 1914, p. 3/417) These institutions then spread significantly in Egypt. Ibn Battuta, during his travels in Egypt, mentioned their abundance and that the emirs competed in building them. Each zawiya (small Islamic monastery) in Egypt was dedicated to a group of the poor, most of whom were non-Arabs knowledgeable in the ways of Sufism. He described the types of food provided there, and that each zawiya had a sheikh and a guard, with residents receiving summer and winter clothes, monthly stipends, sweets made from sugar every Friday night, and soap for washing their clothes (Ibn Battuta, 2007, p. 56)

These khanqahs, or Sufi houses, were akin to schools, serving as institutions for the common people who dedicated themselves to a life of austerity and asceticism, whether they were from the general population or from the skilled trades and industries. These khanqahs played religious, social, and cultural roles. (AL-Sallabi , 2017, p. 353)

4 SALAH AL-DIN'S STRATEGY IN ADOPTING SUFI VALUES IN MILITARY LEADERSHIP TO CONFRONT THE CRUSADERS

The political instability and invasions faced by Muslims during the 6th and 7th centuries AH / 13th and 14th centuries AD led to the migration of many scholars, especially after the decline of the Seljuk state, to safer regions where the Zangids and Ayyubids ruled. These scholars received significant care from their rulers, who understood the importance of scholars in social life and their role in mobilizing Muslims to lead the jihad against the Crusaders (Yilmaz, 2018, p. 4). Nur al-Din was particularly

notable for his attention to the Sufis, recognizing their role in jihad against the Crusaders both through words and through the sword, with many achieving martyrdom. A large number of Sufi murabitun (those stationed at ribats) were present in frontier areas performing their jihad duties. These Sufis not only urged people to jihad but also encouraged the sultans to participate, playing a significant role in the religious and political struggle against the Fatimids and Crusaders (Tay, 2021, p. 999).

Salah al-Din followed the approach of his mentor, Nur al-Din Zangi, who was known for his great interest in jihad against the Crusaders. Salah al-Din's passion for jihad was overwhelming, and it was said that if one were to swear that Salah al-Din spent every dinar and dirham after engaging in jihad solely for jihad, the oath would be truthful. He even left his family, homeland, and children out of love for jihad and reverence for it. (Ibn Shaddad , 2012, p. 17) Salah al-Din was also distinguished by his humility with people, his disdain for the arrogant, and his closeness to the poor and the Sufis (Ibn al-Athir , n.d, p. 10/230). He sought to attract scholars to Egypt, especially the Sufis who played a role in inciting people to jihad, particularly since Egypt had been under Fatimid rule for a long period. Salah al-Din found it necessary to create an appropriate environment in Egypt to lead the jihad against the Crusaders and liberate Jerusalem.

This excessive attention to Sufi matters aimed to erase all traces of Fatimid esoteric influence on the sentiments of the people in Egypt and fill them with the gentle, forgiving morals of the Sufis, making them less attached to worldly pleasures. The Sufis had the ability to address people's emotions through assemblies of preaching and remembrance (dhikr). (Ahmed, 2020)

Salah al-Din provided Sufis in Egypt with all necessary provisions. He arranged for them daily supplies of food (bread, meat, and sweets), and annually gave them forty dirhams for clothing. Additionally, he built baths next to their lodgings, and those who wished to travel were provided with financial support to help them reach their destinations. The Sufis during Salah al-Din's reign were distinguished by their knowledge and piety, and their blessings were sought. (Al-Maqrizi , 1998, p. 4/282) Salah al-Din's interest in the Sufis was influenced by his mentor, Nur al-Din Zangi, who valued Sufi institutions, respected their scholars, listened to their advice, and consulted them on many issues. The Sufis supported Salah al-Din in many battles against the Crusaders, notably aiding him during the siege of the Franks in Alexandria, where many of the city's inhabitants were Sufis. His respect for the Sufis of Alexandria was so profound that he

endowed them with all that he had seized from the Franks after their defeat in 572 AH / 1176 AD, and he treated them generously after the conquest of Aleppo in 579 AH / 1183 AD. (Al-Shami, 1991, p. 81; Al-Sallabi, 2017,353).

Salah al-Din's personality is marked by significant interests in constructing military and educational institutions, such as ribats, khanqahs, and zawiyas, which served both military and educational purposes. Moreover, he showed special care in including Sufi sheikhs in his battles to gain their opinions and advice. Their presence served as a strong motivation for soldiers to fight bravely and courageously. During the Battle of Hittin in 583 AH / 1187 AD and the conquest of Jerusalem, the presence of many scholars, Sufis, and mystics underscored the vital role that spiritual and religious dimensions played in these historical battles (Muhammad & Abed Hussein, 2015,, p. 123)

Salah al-Din also constructed ribats and khanqahs in many areas of the Levant. After completing his conquests in the region and moving towards Acre in 584 AH, he arranged its affairs, dedicating half of the Hospitaller headquarters as a ribat for the Sufis and the other half as a school for jurists (Mujir al-Din al-Hanbali al-Alimi, 1999, p. 494). This highlights Salah al-Din's understanding of the importance of religious and intellectual preparation in the jihad movement. The Sufis provided spiritual nourishment for the warriors, encouraging them to forsake worldly attachments and dedicate themselves to jihad in the path of Allah, while the scholars focused on building the intellectual foundation of the people and raising awareness of the external threats to the Islamic existence.

5 PROMINENT SUFI FIGURES DURING THE REIGN OF SALAH AD-DIN

5.1 Najeeb ad-Din al-Khabbushani (d. 587 AH)

Abu al-Barakat Muhammad ibn al-Muwaffaq, known as Najmuddin the Shafi'i jurist, was recognized for his piety and scholarship. When Salah ad-Din became independent in Egypt, he brought him close and honored him and believed in his knowledge and religion (Ibn Khalkan , 1978, pp. 4/239-240). Born in Khabbushan in the Nishapur region, he studied Sufism under Muhammad ibn Yahya and was a student of al-Ghazali. He traveled to Damascus, where he resided at a Sufi khanqah and connected with Salah ad-Din's father and his uncle, Asad ad-Din Shirkuh. After Salah ad-Din

became vizier, al-Khabbushani arrived in Egypt and confronted the Fatimids (Al-Sabki, n.d, p. 7/14; Azam, 2013, 144-145) without fear.

Following the illness of the Fatimid caliph al-Adid, Salah ad-Din managed to end the Fatimid caliphate's sermon (567 AH/1172 AD) and establish the Abbasid caliphate's sermon with the caliph al-Mustadi (Mujir al-Din al-Hanbali al-Alimi, 1999, pp. 455-456). After the fall of the Fatimid state, Salah ad-Din undertook various measures to restore Sunni Islam in Cairo. He encouraged scholars and Sufis to come to Egypt and revive Sunni practices. Salah ad-Din also founded schools and paid special attention to the shrine of Imam al-Shafi'i, largely due to al-Khabbushani's encouragement. Al-Khabbushani played a significant role in reasserting the Sunni identity of the state, particularly through the construction of a school next to the shrine of Imam al-Shafi'i.

Salah ad-Din highly respected and supported al-Khabbushani, fulfilling his requests and providing substantial funding (Al-Imad al-Isfahani, 2004, p. 301) for the construction of his school. Al-Khabbushani suggested building the school near Imam al-Shafi'i's shrine (Ibn Khalkan , 1978, p. 4/240) to promote Sunni jurisprudence. He openly declared his intention to work towards the removal of the Fatimid rule and even cursed them, which led to considerable confusion among the Fatimids.

When the Fatimids attempted to appease al-Khabbushani with gifts and money, he vehemently refused and rebuked their envoy, expressing his disdain for their attempt. After al-Adid's death, Salah ad-Din was cautious about reinstating Abbasid sermons and feared Shiite backlash. Al-Khabbushani took a stand by ordering the preacher to mention the Abbasids, thus restoring the Abbasid sermon in Cairo to the public's joy (Al-Sabki, n.d, p. 7/15).

Salah ad-Din held al-Khabbushani in high regard for his adherence to Islamic law and considered him a key figure in preserving Islamic unity (Azam, 2013, pp. 144-145) Al-Khabbushani's influence was evident when he requested Salah ad-Din to exempt people from taxes while he was preparing for a campaign against the Crusaders in Ramla. Salah ad-Din initially refused, leading to a minor confrontation. After suffering defeat in the battle, Salah ad-Din returned to al-Khabbushani, acknowledging the role of his rebuke in the defeat. (Al-Sabki, n.d, p. 7/16)

5.2 Ali ibn Ahmad ibn Abi al-Hijaa al-Hakkari (d. 588 AH / 1192 AD)

Ali ibn Ahmad, also known as Abu al-Hassan, Sayf ad-Din and al-Mashṭoub, was a prominent general and strategist (Al-Tawahi , 2020, p. 116) in Salah ad-Din's military. He played a key role in the Crusades and was instrumental in establishing and consolidating Salah ad-Din's authority in Egypt and the Levant. Al-Mashṭoub participated in the conquest of Egypt alongside Asad ad-Din Shirkuh and remained a close companion of Salah ad-Din throughout his life.

Al-Mashṭoub's military career was distinguished by several notable achievements. He served as the governor of Acre and was captured by the Crusaders, from whom he managed to ransom himself for fifty thousand dinars. His nickname, "al-Mashṭoub," means "the Scarred One," referring to a wound he received in battle. Salah ad-Din honored him by granting him the entire city of Nablus, recognizing his high status and importance among the Ayyubid leaders. He was esteemed so highly that he was often referred to as "the great prince" (Ibn Kathir, n.d, pp. 8/472-473; Ibn Khalkan, P.1/183; Zirikli, 2002,4/256) and held a position of unmatched prominence within the Ayyubid state.

5.3 Zain al-Din al-Hasan Ali ibn Ibrahim ibn Naja ibn Ghanayem al-Ansari al-Dimashqi al-Hanbali

A jurist and preacher of significant stature and esteem with Saladin. He played a crucial role in exposing the plot orchestrated by the jurist Amarah al-Yamani and his associates, who aimed to overthrow the state due to al-Yamani's allegiance to the Fatimid (Ibn Khalkan , 1978, p. 3/435) dynasty and his attempts to restore its rule by toppling Saladin. This led him to relay the critical information to Saladin, who subsequently ordered their execution. Saladin corresponded with him and included him in his council, a practice continued by his son, King al-Aziz, thereafter (Al-Dhahabi, p. 21/394).

This reveals that Zain al-Din's role extended beyond mere preaching to a profound sense of duty towards Saladin’s state, which was engaged in conflicts with the Crusaders at the time. While the state was occupied with external threats, internal conspiracies were being formed to reinstate Fatimid rule. This prompted Zain al-Din to alert Saladin to the imminent dangers posed against him.

5.4 Ghanim ibn Ali ibn Ibrahim ibn Asakir ibn Husayn al-Ghamari (d. 632 AH / 1234 AD)

The Levant was an important destination for Muslims due to its strategic significance in the ongoing jihad against the Crusaders. The Maghrebi presence in the region played a notable role, driven by their commitment to the jihad and their affection for the Levant, particularly Jerusalem. The al-Ghamari family, a prominent Maghrebi family, settled in Nablus in 558 AH / 1163 AD. Ghanim al-Ghamari, born in the village of Bureen near Nablus in 562 AH / 1167 AD, was one of the most renowned figures from this family.

He lived in Jerusalem in the year 583 AH / 1187 AD when Salah ad-Din freed him from the Crusaders. Al-Ghamari was a revered Sufi who devoted himself to worship and asceticism (Al-Dhahabi , Tareekh al-Islam wa Wafayat Mashahir al-A'lam, 1998, p. 46/118). His significant contribution was in the realm of jihad against the Crusaders. Salah ad-Din entrusted him with the command of the Moroccan troops during the Battle of Hittin. Upon the arrival of the Ayyubid forces (Bin Saleh, n.d.) in Palestine, Ghanim al-Ghamari, along with many Maghrebi warriors and volunteers, supported the jihad effort under Sultan Ya'qub ibn Yusuf al-Muwahhid (1184–1199 AD). This support was crucial in the struggle against the Crusaders, demonstrating the active involvement of Maghrebi fighters in the liberation of the region.

5.5 Sheikh Abu Madyan al-Ghawth al-Andalusi

He was one of the mystic warriors from the Maghreb during the time of Salah al-Din. King al-Afdal ibn Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi ordered the establishment of endowments for him, his children, and his disciples. The boundaries of the endowment of Sidi Abu Madyan, as stipulated in historical documents, are the endowment of Sidi Abu Madyan or the Maghrebis' endowment which begins at Bab al-Maghrib and extends to Bab al-Silsila, which are main gates of the western wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, specifically the Buraq Wall (Al-Ghawth,, n.d.)

5.6 Abdul Rahim al-Qanawi

Born in the village of Targai, in the city of Ceuta, located in the Ghomara region of the western Maghreb in 521 AH / 1127 AD, he was originally called "Asad" but changed his name to Abdul Rahim after moving to Egypt. His family lineage traces back to Imam Hussein, and his mother was the noble lady Sakinah, daughter of Ahmad ibn Hamzah al-Harrani. He was from the Banu Hamzah, who were leaders of the Levant. His teachers were renowned for their knowledge and piety. He was a prominent figure in Sufism in Egypt and the Islamic world, and traveled to Damascus in 534 AH, where he met his maternal relatives, who honored his visit and facilitated his connections with prominent scholars and jurists there. He spent eight years in Damascus, during which he studied the sciences of the Eastern scholars and also gained knowledge of the Maghrebi sciences (Al-Dsouqi, 2017). Abdul Rahim al-Qanawi is closely associated with the Ayyubid state, which sought to strengthen the foundations of Sunni doctrine across Egypt, especially after the fall of the Fatimid state. Al-Qanawi was among the leading scholars who received support from Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi and his son, due to his significant role in spreading authentic Islam. (Abdul Rahman Abu Bakr 2023)

This reflects the Maghrebi interest in supporting their Levantine brethren in the jihad against the Crusaders, and the particular concern of Moroccan kings in encouraging many Maghrebis to head to Jerusalem to liberate it from the invaders. It is also evident that most of those who arrived in the Levant from the Maghreb were mystics whose goal was jihad and motivating many Moroccan Muslims to participate in supporting the Muslims of the East.

6 MAJOR KHANQAHS DURING THE TIME OF SALAH AL-DIN

Salah al-Din was keen on establishing khanqahs to facilitate the lives of mystics (Sufis) by providing them with care, food, drink, and shelter. These establishments were intended to attract Sufis from across the Islamic world, allowing them to settle in the Levant and Egypt to confront the Crusaders. Before discussing the most notable khanqahs of Salah al-Din’s time, it is useful to define what a khanqah is. According to al-Maqrizi, the term "khanqah" has Persian origins and means "house." It is said to be derived from "khwānqāh," meaning the place where the king eats. It was a new concept in Islam,

emerging around the 400th year of the Hijra, created for Sufis to engage in the worship of Allh. (Al-Maqrizi , 1998, p. 280)

Among the most famous khanqahs built by Salah al-Din were:

6.1 Khanqah of Sa'id al-Su'ada

This khanqah, also known as the Salahiyya Khanqah in Cairo, was historically significant and esteemed. (Al-Qalqashandi , 1914, p. 4/38) It was constructed in the area of Bab al-Eid in Cairo and was known in the Fatimid era as the House of Sa'id al-Su'ada, named after the teacher Qanbar or Anbar, the ancient Fatimid Caliph al-Mustansir's servant. This house was situated opposite the Ministry House. After the death of the Fatimid Caliph al-Adid and Salah al-Din’s assumption of control over Egypt, he allocated this house for Sufis coming from distant lands and endowed it with waqfs (charitable endowments), providing all necessary provisions for its residents. It became the first khanqah established in Egypt, known as the "Dwaira of the Sufis".

People from Egypt would travel to Cairo to visit the Khanqah of Sa'id al-Su'ada seeking blessings and goodness. (Al-Maqrizi, 1998,282-283; Al-Suyuti, 1967, p. 2/260) The Sufis played a significant role in preparing the people of Egypt both educationally and spiritually, in preparation for the confrontation with the Crusaders and the liberation of Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. This preparation was crucial and involved two main aspects: first, cleansing the people of Egypt from the influences of the Fatimid's esoteric teachings, and second, instilling Sunni education based on true Sufi principles (Ahmed, The Role of Sufis in Supporting Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque (Published June 27, 2020, accessed, 2020). The khanqah was fully equipped with all daily necessities to allow its residents to focus on worship. Established in 569 AH / 1174 AD, it was the first of its kind in the region and gained a prestigious reputation as an esteemed educational institution, (Said, 2012, p. 1458) with renowned scholars and teachers offering instruction there.

6.2 The Salahiyya Khanqah

Salah al-Din preserved the traditions of his Ayyubid family and, before them, the Nur al-Din Zengi family, in their commitment to reviving Sunni Islam. To this end, he

focused on building schools and khanqahs to achieve this goal. (Azam, 2013, p. 221) This khanqah is located at Bab al-Asbat and was previously a Roman church known as the Tomb of Hannah (named after Hannah, the mother of Mary, peace be upon her). Salah al-Din endowed it to the Sufis and made its leadership a Sunni position in the Islamic realm. (Rizk, 1997, pp. 1/129-130) He designated it as a place for Sufis to reside, engage in dhikr (remembrance of God), and recite the Quran. (Azam, 2013, p. 221) Reports indicate that Salah al-Din was concerned about the activities of the Franks in the church, thus he made this building a center of surveillance. (The Salahiyya Khanqah 2016, Salah al-Din's Retreat with the Lord , 2016) It is considered one of the first khanqahs established by Salah al-Din in Jerusalem after its liberation. The residents engaged in scholarship, preaching, poetry, and judiciary (Rizk, 1997, p. 130).

7 CONCLUSION

Based on the above, it is evident that Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi sought to utilize the Sufis to address internal threats facing the Muslims, particularly the Fatimid danger that obstructed the unity of the Levant and Egypt. The Sufis supported him in reviving Sunni Islam through the khanqahs established by Salah al-Din, which played a significant role in the spiritual preparation of Muslims and their efforts to erase the traces of the Fatimids by attracting them to Sunni Islam and reviving its manifestations in Egypt. The Sufis also assisted externally in facing the Crusader threat and mobilized human resources for this purpose. During his reign, several renowned Sufi figures known for their bravery emerged, and we also see participation from Moroccan Sufis in the jihad movement. This indicates the unity of the Islamic front at that time, which contributed to Salah al-Din's subsequent victory at the Battle of HIttin and the purification of Jerusalem from Crusader invasion. This success was due to Salah al-Din's lenient policies, his asceticism, and his closeness to this group, which led to a coalition of hearts in his love and obedience, especially after they witnessed his dedication to jihad and his provision of all necessary comforts to achieve his noble goal of liberating the Levant from the Crusaders' defilement.

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All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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