Global Sufism: Boundaries, Structures, and Politics

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The book is an edited volume by Mark Sedgwick and Francesco Piraino. Currently serving at Aarhus University, Denmark, Sedgwick is an expert in religion and Sufism, as well as an Islamologist and historian. Piraino holds a PhD in sociology and studies religion and its social role.

The book consists of twelve chapters on Sufism: exploring its global and transnational role, contributed by different authors. Robert Irwin, in the first Chapter, has analysed the teachings and influence of Rumi. Author has also discussed the role of a Tamil spiritual master of the Qadria Order, Bawa Muhayudin, in transforming the life of Coleman Barks, who later turned out to be a proponent of Rumi. He mentioned the strategies of branding Rumi by introducing Rumi Caps, Rumi Shirts, etc. and concluded that through such acts and branding, he attracted the young audience in Western Europe and the US (pp. 15-16).

In the second Chapter, Sedgwick discussed the role of shaykhs who travelled to the West and worked for Islamisation there. The chapter starts with a review of Islamization in the West from a universalist perspective of Sufism , focusing on the shaykhs of 1960 and 1970s who migrated to the West. While examining the process of Islamization, a key factor to consider (p. 51) is organization and leadership.

In the third Chapter on the Afropolitan Sufism, Zachary mentions the global role of the Tijaniyya. Author thoroughly discussed the historical evolution of the order in Africa and beyond (p. 63), as well as its organization and modernization from the perspective of new initiatives. He discussed the term Afropolitanism: a hybrid, locally negotiated identity that goes beyond the essentialization of blackness or Africa. The author avoided studying the presence of Tijaniyya in the West. Tijaniyya has adopted modern trends, including the use of music and artists to reach a wider audience.

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Piraino in the fourth Chapter studied the Shadhiliyya Darqawiyya Alawiyya and analysed the concept of 'Otherness'. He finds that the major objective of the method is to understand the spiritual and universal dimension of a disciple. The 'Alawiyya' reconfigured its face by using the means of globalisation to attract the public globally.

Andrea Brigaglia, in Chapter five, studied the two different traditions and analysed their conjunction. He studied the Sufi qassīda in Arabo-Islamic world and rap of Afro-American tradition. He focused on the two rapers, Abd Al Malik (French Sufi rapper) and Kery James. The rappers adapted or introduced the Arab Islamic qassīda into rap as a hybrid music of two different genres.

Justine Howe, in Chapter six, studied a Sufi foundation known as Mohammad Webb and a committee of mawlids known as Chicago Mawlid Committee. The major objective and agenda of the activities of both committees is to establish a relationship with Allah Almighty and the Exalted Prophet (ﷺ), on individual as well as collective levels,. The author studied the Mawlids with the lens of Sufism and found that most of the Mawlids are attached to Sufis but do not identify themselves as Sufis. Analysis of the trends of the Mawlids shows two different questions: first, dealing with the representational politics of Islam, and second, dealing with institutional authority.

In chapter seven Dickson and Xavier, analysed the unique trends of disordering and reordering of Sufism. As the travelling shaykhs migrated to North America, they faced different social and historical conditions and environments. In the different conditions, the shaykhs reframed their method, practices and teachings according to North America, and this trend is referred as the disordering of Sufism. Afterwards, the Sufi shaykhs reordered Sufism by reorienting or reframing the practices, texts, and terminologies as per the classical Tariqa order. Authors explained that the process was the result of factors like the American religious environment, immigration of Muslims, and the increasing discussion about the authenticity of Islam.

Sinani, in the eighth Chapter, studied the engagement of Sufi tariqas with politics and legal, spiritual, genealogical, and theological bases of orthodoxy and authority. There are many questions related to the making

of alliances and helping each other, like helping or opposing authoritarian regimes and mutual enemies, especially preferring the safety and security over political and personal rights.

Florian Volm in ninth Chapter analysed the movement of Fateh Ullah Gülen, its ideology and organisational structure in and outside the Türkiye. He studied the movement with the lens of Sufism and explained how they adapted change in Sufi thought for their political reach. He finds that the orientation of the movement is thus Sufi-ish, but in its nature, he is not like that. The expression of Sufism in the movement is observed in the texts of Fethullah Gülen.

Simon Stjernholm in tenth Chapter discussed the trend of using the message with a Sufi orientation in a morning Radio show for Muslims in Sweden during 2013-2014. He attempted to understand the causes of the attraction of the message in Swedish society and culture.

The Sufi ideas propagated by the speakers of Sufi orientation through the morning show of Sweden's national radio service played a role to maintain the hegemonic liberal discourse there. As a counter narrative to the radical and intolerant articulations, Sufism is envisioned as a peaceful, tolerant aspect of Islam. The trend was not only promoted by the government but also engaged the stakeholders from Sufi movements of different countries and their representatives.

Joassin in the eleventh Chapter studied the North African Sufism in the purview of the relationship between Sufism and politics. He explained how Algerian authorities used the Sufis message as a counter narrative to the Islamist, intolerant, and radical ideas in their country and promoted the peaceful message of Sufism through making supportive policies. The policies strengthen the traditional Sufi dwelling known as zāwiyas. The trend played the dual role of strengthening the political authorities and countering the Islamist ideas.

Usaama al-Azami in the twelfth Chapter studied Sufism in UAE focusing on the Neo-traditionalism. He analyses the ideas, practices and public rhetoric of five scholars known as Sufis after Arab revolutions of 2011.

There are many studies on transnational Sufism, and this book offers a study of Sufism on a global level. This book addresses major issues faced by Sufism in the wake of Modernism including: State-Sufi Relationship, Transnationalism, Islamization, Alterity, Disordering and Reordering of Sufi Tariqas as well as contemporary global trends. Ontologically, Sufism is an inner spiritual pursuit. In the wake of the forces of globalisation and advancements in science and technology, it became a globally accessible discourse. Contemporary narratives tend to interpret Sufism as a personal matter of an individual. The Sufis historically propagated Sufism as a collective project of social transformation through the purification of the self. As per the book, its commercialisation and branding through marketing is a new phenomenon, a diversion to the already set role of Sufism. The presentation of Sufi poetic tradition in rap and other genres of music and entertainment has globalised its role but also shifted its focus from internal method to external approach. Sufis envisioned, through the spiritual inner refinement of individuals, the way to the establishment of socio-economic justice within a society as a counter-narrative to power-driven and exploitative capitalist structures.

South Asia is as absent as South America and China. Although the political dimensions of Sufism are undeniably important, the book's focus on politics sometimes overshadows other aspects of Sufi life, such as its spiritual, aesthetic, and ethical dimensions. This book is a good read for scholars and students of Sufism. It is a good reference book for understanding the global perspective of Sufism.