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# LEADERS OF SUFI GROUPS IN KAZAKHSTAN SYNCRETISM AND TRANSFORMATION OF DOCTRINE

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## Abstract

Globalization and modernization contributed to the new views on religion, religiosity and spirituality. Religious leaders and religious communities are the largest and most organized civil institutions in the world. Religious leaders, more than any other representatives of civil society, have experience in establishing and working with international partnerships. Their experience is unique and can help global efforts to establish interreligious and interfaith dialogue, spiritual safety. Kazakh religious leaders are also contributing to the global effort. Sufi sheikhs are active actors in the Islamic renaissance. Sufism traditional for Kazakhstan was transformed and acquired the features of syncretic teachings. The reason is that modern leaders of Sufi groups receive foreign education, use multifactorial methods, psychoanalysis and various Western theories. The concepts of neo-Sufism and pseudo-Sufism take place in Kazakhstan. The self-identification of modern Sufis has been transformed; they create new religious constructs. In this regard, the article examines modern Sufi groups and social portraits of their leaders in Kazakhstan. The time frame is from independence to the present. The materials of the article are based on the theoretical basis of Sufism, both domestic and foreign studies, as well as on the information obtained by the authors in field research in Kazakhstan and Turkey. The used methods were depth interviews and participant observation.

*Keywords:* transformation, religious constructs, leaders, Sufi groups, modern

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## 1. Introduction

Sufism as Islamic mysticism with its deep spiritual teachings is interesting to modern people. Part of the religious conversions of Europeans and Americans to Islam is precisely the conversion to Sufism [*Sufi Orders. Muslim networks and movements in Western Europe. Report*, Pew Research Center, September 15, 2010].

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The rich confessional landscape of Kazakhstan is one of the key aspects of interreligious stability in globalization. In the new transforming socio-cultural environment of modern society, the diversity of religious associations is especially clearly manifested, acquiring an increasing number of followers [1].

With the obtaining the independence by Central Asian republics from USSR, began the processes of rethinking the cultural and spiritual heritage, reincarnation of the traditions and customs. Gradually, on the first plan became the issues of spirituality, awareness of historical roots and self-identification. The process of rethinking national history is impossible without turning to Sufism, which had a significant impact in the spread and strengthening of Islam among the people in this region. Currently, there is no unified conceptual view of the historical past of the Kazakhs.

In this regard, the study of the institution of leadership/mentoring in current Sufism, in particular, social portraits of leaders/sheikhs is actual nowadays. In addition, modern methods of transferring spiritual knowledge, new trajectories of activity have influence on the spiritual atmosphere of society.

## **2. Research methodology**

For the preparation of this article were used the methods of sociology of religion and interdisciplinary studies of leadership. In addition, authors conducted a sociological research. We also used information and materials from open resources.

Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century religious leadership has been a focus of researches and scientists. In particular, Max Weber proposed a categorization of leadership [2]. In general, there are many sources devoted to religious leadership, but they are predominantly owned by Western scholars. The theme of leadership in the humanities was posed by philosophers as the theme of creator and follower, master and subordinate, superman (T. Carlisle [3], A. Bregson [4], F. Nietzsche [5], A. Toynbee [6], and others). At the same time, in comparison with Western studies, there are not so many Kazakhstan's works or researches on the topic of religious leadership in Kazakhstan.

As part of the study, from 2016 to 2018, the authors Temirbayeva and Temirbayev conducted a study of a Kazakh Sufi group in Kayseri, Turkey. For researching this group it was used the participant observation method.

In 2015, Kamarova conducted a field study among the Chechens Sufi group of the Sandyktau district of the Akmola region, Kazakhstan, the rural district 'Birlik' (translated from Kazakh as 'Unity') followers of the Qadiriya tariqa [7]. It was used the interview method. She enquired with traditions, beliefs and way of life in this rural district. During field research it wasn't identified the current Sufi leader.

In 2022, between March and May, the author Temirbayeva A. conducted depth interviews with Kazakhstan's leaders and followers of Sufi groups, 11 people in total. A guide of 21 questions was prepared; the goal was studying the

ideological foundations and the current state of Sufism in Kazakhstan, reasons and factors of involvement in Sufism, the place of Sufism in the system of social relations and other key aspects of activity. The followers were found by researching information from open sources, and then by the sociological snowball method. The interviews were conducted offline and by telephone survey.

### **3. Modern Sufi groups in Kazakhstan**

As noted by Kazakhstan's researchers, in particular Muminov [8], Sufism is followed in Kazakhstan in a specific form - Ishanism [9]. It is noted that Sufism mainly spread in the southern and western regions, as evidenced by the numerous graves of saints. However, the authors' field studies show that in the north of the country there are graves of Sufi sheikhs, and they have their own distinctive features, which is reflected on the gravestones.

Currently, there are the following Sufi groups in Kazakhstan:

- Jahriya (consider themselves as followers of the tradition of H.A. Yasavi) has become widespread in the country, leader - Abdugappar Ismatullah;
- Nakshbandiya (mujaddidiya-husainiya) are also available in other countries of Central Asia, leader - Akhmedov Kurbanali Bakbullaevich;
- Naqshbandiya (Hakkaniya of the Mujadidiya-Khalidiya branch), common in the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, active in the USA, Great Britain, Germany, Europe and Russia; followers of Sheikh Muhammad Nazim Adil al-Kubrusi al-Haqqani; leader - Mehmed Adil, governor in Kazakhstan - Nurgazin Daniyar Maralovich, Sagimbayeva Aliya Nurpaevna;
- Naqshbandiya (Rabbaniya), called 'Suhba' intellectual and spiritual school; distributed in the territory of northern and partly southern Kazakhstan; leader - Smagulov Marat Amanzholovich;
- Naqshbandiya, Kadiriya, common among the deported Chechens, Ingush; leader - Imam (name unknown), Muradov Akhmet Seidarakhmanovich (Chechen ethnic group), Ozdoev Sultan Mazhitovich (Ingush ethnic group);
- Turkish Tariqats (Suleymandzhilar, Topbashzhilar, Ykhlaszhilar, Nurdzhular, Fethullazhilar, Mahmudchular); leader - each group has its own leaders; the exact data is unknown [10].

Some Sufi groups have their own central office and regional leaders - 'caliphs'. Moreover, as before, the followers of the Sufi groups are very disciplined and faithful adherents.

Among domestic scientists, there is no consensus attitude towards the resurgent Sufism in general and towards Sufi groups in particular. An analysis of academic sources and author's field materials indicate that there is no common opinion regarding contemporary Sufi groups in Kazakhstan. Therefore, for example, foreign researchers Privatsky [11] and Babadzhanov [12] do not see the negative consequences of the revival of Sufism in Kazakhstan. Domestic

researcher Izbaïrov, has opposite opinion that there is pseudo-Sufi nature of some Sufi groups and points to the negative consequences of the revival of Sufism in Kazakhstan [13]. The scientist also believes that the development of the near-mystical concept of syncretic Sufi trends in the long term leads to a dangerous ‘synthesis’ of pseudo-religious mysticism and ethnic nationalism of ‘blood and ground’. He appeals to the fact that modern occult-mystical movements do not require any self-restraint from their adherents, and therefore they spread faster (the phenomenon of ‘mass character’), and also, when combined with nationalism, mysticism can provoke negative consequences. As an example of such a symbiosis, Izbaïrov cites the ideologies of German and Japanese fascism of the last century.

Foreign Sufi tariqats are also common among the Kazakh people. Thus, the Western researcher Sedgwick writes that Sufi groups in the West today are often classified as Islamic or neo-Sufi [14]. At the same time, he avoided using the term neo-Sufi, arguing that in the world in the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a tendency when classical phenomena were practiced in groups, for example, in India, associated with Sufism, but not Islamic. He also writes that at least two scales are needed: one to measure how Islamic a Sufi group is, and another to assess how classical it is.

Thus, Sufi groups of various traditions, mainly Islamic, have been active in Kazakhstan since independence. Since about 2015, non-Islamic groups began to appear as part of trainings for spiritual and personal growth with elements of Sufi rituals (whirling). These practices are not considered in this article. In general, there is a trend towards an increase in the number of Sufi groups in the country.

#### **4. Social portraits of modern leaders of Sufi tariqats**

Information about the leaders of modern domestic Sufi groups was obtained from interviews with the heads and followers of the Sufi groups; scientific materials and from open information sources. It should be noted that the study failed to identify the current religious leader among the Chechens and Ingush, and the network of Turkish tariqats is also distinguished by its closeness and requires separate study. In this regard, will be considered the portraits of the current four leaders of Sufi groups.

##### **4.1. Tariqat ‘jahriya’ (Yasaviya)**

- *leader* - Abdugappar Ismatulla born in 1948 (74 years old);
- *citizenship* - native of Afghanistan, since 2002 citizen of Kazakhstan;
- *nationality* - Kazakh;
- *education* - Madrasah in Peshawar, Pakistan;
- *legitimacy (Silsila)* - according to the leader’s words is Maimak ishan from the Afghan Kazakh diaspora. It is not known for sure;

- *position* - guarded by God is the ruler (Magzum - taksyr);
- *dhikr* - loud dhikr 'jahr', usually on Thursday, during the celebration of religious and secular holidays;
- *proceedings, printed editions* - republican newspaper 'Three storms' (Ush Kiyani); Books: 1. *Proof of Zikr Jahr (Zhariya Zikirdin Daleli)* [15]; 2. *Alphabet of Koranic secrets (Quran syrlaryn alippesi)* [16];
- *central office* - republican public association 'Believe.Knowledge. Life' (Senim. Bilim. Omir) in 17 cities, 18 settlements, about 200 representative offices in total, the vocal group 'Yassavi'. (The organizations were active until the arrest of the group leader in 2011);
- *the language of the sermon* is Kazakh with references in Arabic;
- *speech* - loud voice, staged speech, charisma, former military ideologue (uses various speech techniques).

#### **4.2. Nakshbandiya 'Mujaddidiya-Husayniyah'**

- *leader* - Akhmedov Kurbanali Bakbullaevich, born in 1955 (67 years old);
- *citizenship* - Uzbekistan;
- *nationality* - Uzbek;
- *education* - Miri Arab Madrasah, Bukhara, Uzbekistan;
- *legitimacy (Silsila)* - from Ibrahimdzhan Mamatkulov from Kokand. Spiritual chain of succession from the Indian theologian Ahmad Sirhindi (Imam Rabbani, 1564-1624), the author of the famous work 'Maktubat', and the Naqshbandi sheikh Muhammad Husayn from Bukhara (died in 1833 or 1834);
- *position* - Ishan is the title or nickname given to the leader of the Sufi tariqa;
- *dhikr* - Quiet dhikr, weekly collective loud dhikr, quiet dhikr daily at night, during the celebration of religious holidays.
- *proceedings, printed editions* - in Kazakh language: 1. *The meaning of the madhhab (Mazhab manisi)* [17], 2. *The book about prayer (Namaznama)* [18], 3. *Following knowledge (Ilinge ilesu)* [19], 4. *The book about the soul (Rukhnama)* [20], 5. *The book about tariqat (Tariqatnama)* [21], 6. *Whoever has a Teacher, he has no reason to worry (Piri bardyn, kamy bar)* [22], 7. *The spirits are the life-giving source of Allah (Aruak - Allany abylkhayats)* [23]. Newspaper 'The Way of Truth' (Khak Zholy) in Kazakh and Russian languages;
- *central office* - Taraz city (south Kazakhstan), the Religious Association 'Islamic intercession' (Islam Shapagaty);
- *the language of the sermon* - Kazakh, Uzbek, Russian;
- *speech* - quiet, monotonous pace of speech, often speaks with a microphone.

### 4.3. *Naqshbandiya Rabbaniya - intellectual and spiritual school 'Suhba'*

- *leader* - Smagulov Marat Amanzholuly born in 1968 (54 years old);
- *citizenship* - Kazakhstan;
- *nationality* - Kazakh;
- *education* - Master of Theology Al-Azhar International University, Cairo, Egypt;
- *legitimacy (Silsila)* - has a license that allows its owner to transmit a certain text, knowledge (Idjaza) from Ali ibn Hussein, Yusuf Khattar - doctor in 5 sciences as said the leader of this Sufi group;
- *position* - Hakim (holder of wisdom);
- *dhikr* - loud dhikr at a convenient time for followers, mainly on weekends, individually silent dhikr; new form - online;
- *proceedings, printed editions* - books: *Tasauf, My Way* (books not published, distributed among followers; the leader of the Sufi group gave the books to the authors);
- *central office* - Nur-Sultan (the capital of Kazakhstan);
- *the language of the sermon* - Russian, Kazakh with references in Arabic;
- *speech* - good diction, competent speech in both languages, calm voice. The information is presented confidently and clearly; gestures are used.

### 4.4. *Naqshbandiya Mujadidiya Khalidiya*

- *leader* - Nurgazin Daniyar Maralovich, born in 1980 (42 years);
- *citizenship* - Kazakhstan;
- *nationality* - Kazakh;
- *education* - London University of the Arts, (University of the Arts London);
- *legitimacy (Silsila)* - from Sheikh Muhammad Nazim Adil al-Kubrusi al-Haqqani;
- *position* - Murid, the main representative from Kazakhstan;
- *dhikr* - collective loud dhikr, individually silent dhikr;
- *central office* - Nur-Sultan (the capital of Kazakhstan);
- *the language of the sermon* - Russian;
- *speech* - good diction, competent speech, business communication style.

Thus, the current leaders of Sufi practices attract followers not only by their own spirituality and righteous behaviour, but also by their personal characteristics and position in society.

Respondents-followers of different Sufi groups to the question 'Who is your authority in Sufism?' unanimously answered - my sheikh. Also, during the interview, the followers noted that they were attracted to the teacher by the following:

- education,
- the ability to answer pressing questions,

- high spirituality,
- activities for the benefit of the country,
- business partnership [Authors' field materials].

In addition, the followers noted that the sheikhs maintain international ties with other Sufi tariqats, and the geography of followers is not limited to Kazakhstan.

## **5. New views of the Sufis - transformation and syncretism of doctrine**

### **5.1. Jahrists**

The head of the tariqat, Ismatullah Abdugappar, was in prison for 10 years. During this time, his followers Sanjar Kerimbay, Mukhit Tolegen and others continued the activities of the Sufi group. The activities of the group continue in several directions:

- Attraction of new adherents in Kazakhstan and Turkey. Basically, these are young people from Central Asian countries who study in Turkey.
- Writing books for a wide range of readers, including children. Some of the books are religious literature. The books use modern Western methods of pedagogy, psychology and marketing. The ideologists of this Sufi group began to use the works of V. Frankl [24], S. Freud [25], A. Adler [26], resulting in a symbiosis of Sufism, logo-therapy and Psychology. At the same time, the opinion of the main leader Ismatullah Abdugappar on such transformations is unknown.

Currently, the focus of the group has shifted to the education of children and adolescents. Gadget detox camps are organized, where children are engaged in self-development, playing musical instruments, reading the Koran. Videos are systematically released where children reading dhikr.

During an interview with one of the main followers of the Jahrists, differences with traditional Sufism were noted. Therefore, he noted that each person needs self-development and it is not advisable to wait for decades for permission for this or that act from a spiritual teacher. However, following all the orders of sheikh is one of the key postulates of the Sufi way. The head of this group inspired his followers that he was the 'true Mahdi', that is, the twelfth caliph and the last successor of the Prophet Muhammad.

In addition, as one of the leaders of the Naqshbandi group noted, appeals of Ismatullah Abdugappar to the Presidents of the USA, Russia, Turkey, discredit all Sufi practices in the country.

Currently, the leader Ismatullah Abdugapar is in Turkey, the extent of his participation and continuation of the activities of this Sufi group is unknown.

## 5.2. *Naqshbandiya ‘Mujaddidiya-Husayniyah’*

The head Akhmedov Kurbanali Bakbullaevich, in the first years of Kazakhstan’s independence, was prosecuted for leading the activities of a radical Islamist community and was deported to his homeland in Uzbekistan. In addition, in Uzbekistan, he was also detained, as forbidden religious literature was found during a search. In December 2014, a critical article appeared in the Uzbek newspaper ‘Darakchi’ [Darakchi newspaper, *Naqshbandiylikning ‘soxta piri’ shakkoklikda ayblandi*, Ozdolik radiosy, 2014], he was accused of infidelity and paganism (shirk) due to the fact that in the book *Rukhnama* he called himself a ‘pole’ (‘kutb’) and ‘ruler of the worlds’. According to an interview with one of the followers of this Sufi group - the head of the tariqat has several madrasas in Turkey. An analysis of the works shows that the head made an attempt to explain the Koranic, Sufi postulates through the Natural sciences - Physics, Quantum mechanics, Astronomy. Analysis of video materials shows that knowledge is transferred through conversations (sokhbets).

## 5.3. *Nakshbandiya-Rabbaniya - the intellectual and spiritual school ‘Suhba’*

Leader Smagulov Marat uses anti-Salafi rhetoric, which is actual for the state at the present time. He has work experience in government bodies, law enforcement structures. He was expelled from the Naqshbandi tariqa mujadidiya-khalidiya by the central apparatus in Turkey. As noted by the respondents and the leader himself, there were some disagreements in this Sufi group. In this connection, Smagulov Marat organized his own Sufi tariqa, later he received the license (idjaza) from two Sufi sheikhs from Turkey and Syria. Women are allowed to dhikr together with men, which contradicts the traditional postulates of Sufism. During the interview, it was found that in the tariqah there is an authoritative woman to whom followers turn for advice and questions.

In addition, one of the attracting factors is the availability of presentation of religious knowledge in Russian. Due to the fact that the state language, the Kazakh language, has not been sufficiently institutionalized over the years of independence, there is still a part of the population that is more fluent speaks in Russian. The doctrine is popularized by using the rhetoric of Kazakh tribalism - division into clans. In particular, the revival of the Kypchak genus and the tradition of the sacredness of ancestors.

## 5.4. *Naqshbandiya Mujadidiya Khalidiya*

Leader in Kazakhstan Nurgazin Daniyar Maralovich is the head of a network of real estate companies selling luxury apartments in Kazakhstan and Northern Cyprus. It should be noted that religious tourism is one of the aspects of filling the budget of any country. Therefore, realtors help on searching apartments for pilgrims in Northern Cyprus. They organize pilgrimage tours,



meetings with sheikhs. The activity of this group is similar to public business meetings. In this Sufi group used discourses are: spiritual growth, profit, realization of desires, development of one's own business, healing from diseases. It should be noted that in terms of age composition they cover a group mainly represented by young people under 50 years old. This group has a separate women's association. The leader is a follower who received a personal initiation into the tariqa (bayat) from Sheikh Nazim. She is an active participant in various attractions in Kazakhstan. In addition, she is rodology founder, which is popular among Kazakhs. Through this it attracts new adherents in tariqat.

As noted, one of the subsequent members of another Sufi group is attracted by the activity of this Sufi group, since their activity is more open, flexible and meets the requirements of modern man.

### ***5.5. Chechen and Ingush Sufi practices in Kazakhstan***

The researcher Muminov noted that there are difficulties in studying the Chechen and Ingush Sufi communities. The reason was closed group and language barriers [8]. However, at present, the followers of these practices are open to the public and scientists. At the same time, during the interview, it was not possible to identify what part of the Chechens, Ingush belong to the tariqa of Kadiriya and Nakshbandiya. Nowadays at open resources, there are video recordings of dhikrs. Researcher Kamarova, visited the community of Vis-Khadzhins of the Atbasar region, the village of Krasnaya Polyana. During conversations with the head of the village, it was established that women were allowed to dhikr, this was due to deportation and the small number of survivors [7]. This fact was negatively perceived by the traditional Chechen and Ingush tariqats in both republics in Russia. In general, Sufi practices among representatives of these nationalities are perceived as traditional ethnic.

### ***5.6. Turkish tariqats***

Turkish Sufi groups are represented in the country by: topbashcilar, suleymencilar, nurcular, ikhlascilar, mahmudchular [10]. These groups are closed to the any alliances. By this reason there is no chance to establish contact with the followers. They confess to Sunni Islam. During the years of independence of Kazakhstan, they began to spread through the Kazakh-Turkish schools (boarding schools) and Turkish firms (businessmen and their personal). The teachers of these schools were citizens of Turkey and were followers of various branches of Islam and Sufism as well. Religious teachers held meetings (sokhbets) among pupils, for example, it started with simple topics, such as hygiene, keeping the body and environment clean, gradually the topics deepened. Similar meetings were held among both boys and girls. The students were given religious books, records for studying. Students became practicing Muslims, but some of them stopped practicing Islam after graduation. It should

be noted that the quality of education, the discipline of pupils in these schools was distinguished by a high level. According to information from open sources, there was a case in Kazakhstan when a girl suffered from the activities of the Turkish tariqat Suleimencilar in Kazakhstan in 2021. In addition to meetings (sokhbets), dhikrs, rabita was practiced. One of the leaders of the Nakshbandi tariqa noted that the activities of the Turkish tariqas do not belong to Sufism and has only political goals.

It is important to note that almost all the leaders of the Naqshbandi Sufi groups in Kazakhstan, with the exception of Chechen, Ingush practices and Turkish tariqats, supplement the activities of the tariqat with the traditional Yasavi teachings. So, one of the domestic followers noted that during the ceremony of initiation (bayat) in Turkey to Sheikh Nazim, he invoked the spirit of Yasavi. She also noted that the sheikh had a positive attitude towards the Yasavi tariqa and recommended visiting the Mausoleum of H.A. Yasavi in Turkestan.

Thus, leaders of the current Sufi groups supplement the teaching with new aspects, then it attracts new adherents and popularizes the teaching. Kazakh Sufi groups are increasingly developing by the syncretism and psychological techniques. Gender aspects of Sufi teachings are also undergoing transformations. In this regard, it can be noted that predominantly Kazakh Sufi practices belong to neo-Sufism.

Despite the era of the fourth industrial revolution, modern people are in search of meaningful life values, in particular spirituality. Professor A. Knysh said about modern neo-Sufism - "it's like a supermarket, you go and choose what you like" [A.D. Knysh, *The Sufi dilemma: to be with God in solitude or in the crowd?*, CIS Lectures, 2021]. Indeed, the majority of Sufi respondents to the question 'Why did you turn to Sufism? What events and factors led you to it?' answered that they were in search of spirituality and they met a teacher (sheikh).

## **6. Conclusions**

The palette of Turkic school of Sufism is polyphonic. Sufi tradition has a long history. Sufi organizations have revived in many countries of the Middle East, Southeast Asia and North Africa, as well as in Europe, the United States and the republics of the former Soviet Union. Based on the doctrines, moral precepts, and pedagogical methods of the traditional Sufi brotherhoods, they seek to bring about a widespread revival of Sufi institutions and teachings. Evolution of Sufism at the present stage is noted in the world.

Thus, there is no overall picture regarding the personalities of Sufi leaders, each leader has own characteristics. At the same time, charisma, oratorical skills and direct communication play an important role in attracting new adherents. The fact of the long existence of some groups and the creation of new Sufi groups shows the diversity of the religious life of Kazakhstan. Proselytism is being improved and now is carried out in social networks. By this,

Sufi teaching becoming more accessible, emerging new ways and forms of transferring spiritual knowledge. The content of Internet sermons seems to be actual for modern society. Through to receiving a foreign education, Sufis create new discourses in the Kazakhstan's space, bring novels to practice. As a result, created new religious constructs. The fundamental criteria for admission to dhikr are changed. Russian language is used in the sermons. Sufi teaching is changing and supplementing, transforming and acquiring new syncretic aspects.

In general, the following trajectories are inherent in modern neo-Sufism in Kazakhstan: emphasis on women, children, youth and scientists; modernization of the doctrine and the use of marketing strategies in the dissemination of the doctrine. In this regard, some trends can be noted. Firstly, the leaders of Kazakhstan's Sufi groups attract the elite of society, intellectually developed, educated people with an average financial income (officials, scientists, entrepreneurs, businessmen). Government officials will broadcast ideas to society, and scientists at the academic level will spread and legitimize Sufism and its practice, thereby will no doubt about the authenticity of the teaching. Secondly, the modern image of the leaders of Sufi groups, their self-improvement (obtaining a foreign education, learning languages), as a result, access to sources in foreign languages and, consequently, the transformation of the Sufi tradition, the creation of new religious constructions and discourses. Sufis are actively developing the pedagogical aspects of religious practice, using modern technological innovations in the methodology of education. Globalization processes also influences to Sufi practices. With mass access to the Internet becomes the virtualization of the teachings (online dhikr, zoom conversations, stream, etc.). Representatives of almost all Sufi groups actively use online platforms, social networks and video hosting for distributing ideas of Sufism.

Some Sufi groups violated the law and were brought to justice, in connection with which some domestic scholars call them pseudo-Sufi. It should be noted that there is a transition of followers from one group to another. None of the Sufi groups has official registration as a religious association in the judicial authorities of Kazakhstan as Sufi branch.

Self-identification and self-reflection of Sufi groups in Kazakhstan requires further academic study. Sufism is an important component of the spiritual and cultural heritage of the Central Asian region. The positive values of Sufi traditions can be used in modern times.

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