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IDEAS OF MUTAZILISM, MUTAKALLIM AND SUFISM

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ABSTRACT

Historical development has been studied from the point of view of many disciplines, but the social impact of ideological processes in the history of our people, including the ideological processes of the Middle Ages, Mutazilism, Mutakallim and Sufism, has not been fully explored. This article describes the results of scientific research conducted in this direction.

KEYWORDS

Idea, ideology, religion, Islam, ideological monopolization, “ulum naklia”, “ulum akliya”, “double reality”, mutazilism, mutakallim, sufism, “egoistic-axetism”, “jiddu jahd”.

INTRODUCTION

By the 9th century, the territories conquered by the Arabs had expanded to such an extent that this growth necessitated qualitative changes. New socio-economic relations, based on diverse geographic environments, races, nations, cultures, and traditions, created a need to rely not only on the evidence found in the Quran and hadith but also on rational arguments. As a result of this need, alongside the religious sciences established

with the foundations of Islam, secular sciences that interpreted the world rationally also emerged.

Indeed, “By the 9th century, early medieval culture divided all sciences into two categories: the *ulum al-qadimiya*—‘traditional sciences’ (also referred to as *ulum al-Islam*, *ulum an-naqliya*, or *ulum ash-shar‘iya*, meaning ‘Islamic sciences’ or ‘shari’a sciences’), which



encompassed knowledge related to Islamic rules, the language and style of the Quran, and Arabic linguistics; and *ulum al-‘ajam*—‘non-Arab sciences’ (also called *ulum at-tabiiya* or *ulum al-‘aqliya*, meaning ‘rational sciences’), which included mathematics, medicine, logic, metaphysics, and other fields. The primary function of the first group of sciences was to strengthen and regulate Islamic knowledge, while the second group focused on studying the natural world and its characteristics” [1].

The 9th century marked a turning point in the promotion of Islamic ideas. Unlike previous periods, proponents of *ulum al-‘aqliya*—rational sciences—began to contribute to the dissemination of Islamic ideology. As a result, Islamic ideology became a framework not only for religious scholars but also for those committed to rational knowledge. During this period, debates evolved from casual conversations into academic discussions, transitioning from everyday consciousness to theoretical awareness. Convincing scholars to adopt specific ideas proved challenging, leading to the division of scholars into two main factions: the Mu'tazilites and the *mutakallimun* (theologians). “While the *mutakallimun* opposed free interpretation of Quranic concepts in any form, the Mu'tazilites emphasized the idea of reason in *Kalam*, demonstrating that rational inquiry is fundamental to acquiring knowledge” [3].

In our view, the Mu'tazilites were pioneers in distinguishing between religious and secular knowledge. Their contribution to the development of Islam lay in their belief that, while human reason might not be as perfect as divine intellect, it is capable of resolving contentious issues in Islamic jurisprudence.

During the reign of Caliph al-Ma'mun (786–833), Mu'tazilism gained state support and became an official doctrine. However, under Caliph al-Mutawakkil (847–861), it was banned and declared heretical. The shift in attitude toward Mu'tazilism occurred because they questioned the axiomatic foundations of Islam in their debates and exerted political pressure on those who did not accept their doctrines, such as the belief in the created nature of the Quran. This repression even included the use of capital punishment.

As we can see, the 9th century brought significant changes to the promotion of Islamic ideas. Before succumbing to theological disputes, Mu'tazilism and *Kalam* fostered a culture of free thought. It was during this time that the doctrine of “Double Truth” emerged among theologians, asserting the existence of both divine and worldly truths: the former known only to prophets and saints, and the latter accessible to anyone through knowledge acquisition [3]. These ideological developments laid the foundation for the First Eastern Renaissance (8th–12th centuries), often referred to as the Muslim Renaissance.



The reconciliation of doctrinal differences between Mu'tazilism and Kalam was largely achieved through the teachings of Imam Ash'ari in Iraq and Syria, and Imam Maturidi in Transoxiana. To end these disputes, Abu Mansur Maturidi wrote *Kitab al-Tawhid* (“The Book of Unity”), which refuted baseless theological arguments by aligning with traditional Islamic doctrines concerning God’s essence and attributes, as well as Quranic principles [4]. Scholars like Imam Maturidi played a significant role in preventing further ideological fragmentation in the Islamic world. During the 11th and 12th centuries, when Maturidism was widespread in Transoxiana, the region was known for its stability, contrasting with other areas. As a result, “Imam Ash'ari and Imam Maturidi were recognized as the theological leaders of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jama'ah. Although Ash'ari hailed from Basra and Maturidi from Samarkand, and they never met, they pursued the same mission, reinforcing the unity of Sunni orthodoxy across different regions” [5].

While debates between proponents of religious and secular sciences continued, a new trend—Sufism—began to develop within the Islamic world. Sufism emphasized understanding the divine and creation through love and spiritual experience, rather than through rational inquiry. Unlike theological doctrines that discuss God's attributes (such as hearing, seeing, and speaking), Sufism focuses on experiencing these divine qualities through one’s entire being.

The emergence and popularity of Sufism were greatly influenced by the social conditions of the time. As Professor N. Komilov notes, “Although Sufism grew within Islam, drawing nourishment from the wisdom of the Quran and hadith and often relying on sharia principles, it stood in opposition to the formalism and fanaticism of religious scholars and the lavish lifestyles of the ruling elites. Instead, it expressed the discontent of the working people. Consequently, this doctrine quickly spread among the masses and captivated intellectuals, scholars, and artists in search of truth” [10].

The 9th century saw the flourishing of Sufism, with its followers proclaiming love, peace, and harmony as the essence of their path. These ideas elevated the status of Sufi teachings, helping Transoxiana develop a “strong ideological immunity” in the mid-9th century, despite the doctrinal conflicts in the region [11]. Yusuf Hamadani (1048–1141) played a crucial role in shaping the theoretical and practical foundations of Sufism in Central Asia. His disciples Ahmad Yasawi (d. 1166) and Abdul Khaliq Gijduvani (1103–1179) established two major Sufi orders: the Yasawiyya and the Khwajagan-Naqshbandiyya, the latter further developed by Bahouddin Naqshband (1318–1389). Najmuddin Kubra (1145–1221) independently founded the Kubrawiyya order in Khwarazm.

These Sufi teachings made significant contributions to Islamic thought and practice, including:



1. **Philosophical Contributions:** Sufism introduced a third, highly irrational school of thought—irfan (gnosis)—in addition to Aristotelian and Neoplatonic rationalism and Islamic theology (Mu'tazilism, Ash'arism, Maturidism, and Batiniyya). It also played a key role in the development of the philosophy of illumination (ishraq).
2. **Religious Studies:** Sufism established a distinct system of religious studies.
3. **Impact on Other Disciplines:** Sufism influenced history, Quranic exegesis (with mystical interpretations), hadith studies, literature, linguistics, and pedagogy.
4. **Literary Influence:** Sufi ideas enriched Arabic, Persian, and Uzbek literature with profound meaning, content, and artistic forms.
5. **Musical Influence:** Sufism significantly impacted the development of music, including the classical “Shashmaqam” tradition of Uzbek and Tajik music [6].

Despite its contributions, some Sufi orders embraced irrational approaches, promoting asceticism and detachment from the material world. This shift weakened the initial spirit of effort and perseverance that characterized early Islamic teachings, leading to the rise of egoistic asceticism in social life.

The spread of ascetic ideas, such as those propagated by Ahmad Yasawi’s Yasawiyya order, coincided with the Mongol invasion of Khwarazm (beginning in 1219). This suggests a correlation between the weakening of societal resolve and external conquests.

As history shows, the decline of effort-driven ideas and the rise of asceticism led to stagnation in the Muslim world. However, the resurgence of effort-based ideas, such as those embodied by the Naqshbandiyya order, aligned with the rise of Timur’s empire, which marked a period of cultural and intellectual revival in the 14th–16th centuries, known as the Second Eastern Renaissance [12]. This period demonstrated that “asceticism leads to decline, while effort and engagement with the world lead to progress.”

Unfortunately, this historical pattern was disrupted several times in the evolution of ideological processes in Uzbekistan. Following the Timurid era, the spread of ascetic ideas resulted in social, economic, political, and cultural crises. These crises culminated in the Russian conquest of Turkestan in the mid-19th century.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the 9th century marked a turning point in the promotion of Islamic ideas. During this time, ideological struggles intensified, leading to internal competition among various schools of thought. As Islam spread across vast territories, the need for qualitative changes emerged, necessitating reliance on



both scriptural and rational evidence. This period also witnessed the emergence of Sufism, which enriched Islamic thought and practice with its focus on love and spirituality. However, the rise of irrationalism in certain Sufi orders contributed to social decline, highlighting the importance of balancing spiritual ideals with practical engagement in the world.

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