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THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SUFI KHANQAHS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE IN AZERBAIJAN

This article examines the historical development and socio-cultural role of Sufi khanqahs (lodges) in Islamic mysticism, focusing on their institutionalization and significance in Azerbaijan from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries. Emerging in the eleventh – twelfth centuries during Seljuk expansions, khanqahs evolved from informal mosque gatherings into structured complexes like ribaṭs, zawiyas, and takkiyyas, strategically located along Silk Road routes. In Azerbaijan, they integrated waqf endowments, funding devotional practices, education, and welfare while blending mysticism with economic autonomy. The Khalwatiyya order's prominence in Shirvan and Baku transformed these sites into hubs of spiritual pedagogy and political mobilization under Safavid rule, exemplifying Persianate-Turkic-Caucasian synthesis.

Key challenges include reconciling khanqahs' apolitical mystical ethos – rooted in dhikr, sama, and khalwa – with their Safavid-era politicization as Qizilbash command posts, eroding sanctity amid confessional shifts. Waqf dynamics pose ambiguities: while ensuring independence via agrarian and petroleum revenues, royal patronage intertwined spirituality with authority legitimation. Architectural hybrids, like Baku's Shirvanshahs' Palace, raise questions of dual functions, compounded by Soviet demolitions and archival biases in hagiographies versus archaeology, obscuring indigenous Sufi narratives. The study reconstructs khanqahs' trajectory in Azerbaijan, elucidating waqf's mediation of spiritual-social spheres.

Findings reveal khanqahs as adaptive crucibles: post-1501 bifurcation preserved mysticism while fueling Shiʿi militancy, amassing waqfs that sustained tarbiyya amid upheavals. Baku's ensemble – Qeyqubad Mosque, Crown Gate, cells – confirms dual vocations; Shıxlar tombs highlight lineage continuity. Waqfs channeled resources into equity, with post-Soviet restorations affirming enduring quests. Sufism's synthesis etched ethical-confessional imprints, urging interdisciplinary probes into Azerbaijan's renaissance.

Key words: *Sufi khanqahs, Khalwatiyya, waqf, Safavid Azerbaijan, Shirvan, mysticism, architecture.*

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ІСТОРИЧНИЙ РОЗВИТОК СУФІЙСЬКИХ ХАНКАГІВ ТА ЇХ ЗНАЧЕННЯ В АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНІ

Ця стаття досліджує історичний розвиток та соціокультурну роль суфійських ханкагів (гуртожитків) в ісламському містицизмі, зосереджуючись на їх інституціалізації та значенні в Азербайджані з XV по XVIII століття. Виникнувши в XI–XII століттях під час сельджуцьких експансій, ханкаги еволюціонували від неформальних зібрань у мечетей до структурованих комплексів, таких як рибаţі, завіє та такії, стратегічно розташованих уздовж маршрутів Шовкового шляху. В Азербайджані вони інтегрували вакфові наділи, фінансуючи обряди поклоніння, освіту та добробут, поєднуючи містицизм з економічною автономією. Промінентність ордену Хальватія в Ширвані та Баку перетворила ці місця на осередки духовної педагогіки та політичної мобілізації під правлінням Сефевідів, ілюструючи персідсько-тюркського-кавказький синтез.

Ключові виклики включають примирення аполітичного містичного етосу ханкагів – корінням у зікр, сама та хальва – з їхньою політизацією в сефевідську епоху як командних пунктів кизилбашів, що призводило до ерозії святості серед конфесійних змін. Динаміка вакфів створює неоднозначності: хоча вони забезпечували незалежність через аграрні та нафтові доходи, королівське покровительство переплітáло духовність з легітимацією влади. Архітектурні гібриди, як Палац Ширваншахів у Баку, ставлять питання подвійних функцій, посилені радянськими руйнуваннями та архівними упередженнями в агіографіях проти археології, що затінює корінні суфійські наративи. Дослідження реконструює траєкторію ханкагів в Азербайджані, розкриваючи посередницьку роль вакфів у духовно-соціальних сферах.

Результати розкривають ханкаги як адаптивні тиглі: біфуркація після 1501 року зберегла містицизм, одночасно підживлюючи шиїтську мілітарантність, накопичуючи вакфи, що підтримували тарбію серед потрясінь. Ансамбль Баку – Мечеть Кейкубада, Коронна Брама, комірки – підтверджує подвійні покликання; гробниці Шихлара підкреслюють континуїтет родоводу. Вакфи спрямовували ресурси в рівність, а пострадянські реставрації стверджують стійкі пошуки. Синтез суфізму викарбував етичні-конфесійні відбитки, закликаючи міждисциплінарні дослідження відродження Азербайджану.

Ключові слова: *Суфійські ханкаги, Хальватія, вакф, Сефевідський Азербайджан, Ширван, містицизм, архітектура.*

Statement of the problem. Sufi khānqāhs in Azerbaijan, pivotal in medieval Islamic mysticism, faced tensions between spiritual autonomy and political instrumentalization, especially under Safavid rule (XV–XVIII centuries). Key issues include the erosion of apolitical ethos amid Qizilbash militancy, ambiguities in waqf endowments blending economic independence with royal patronage, and interpretive challenges from architectural hybrids like Baku's Shirvanshahs' Palace, exacerbated by Soviet demolitions and biased historiography that obscures indigenous narratives.

The purpose of the article. This article aims to reconstruct the evolution of khānqāhs as adaptive Sufi institutions in Azerbaijan, elucidating their socio-cultural, economic, and political roles through waqf mechanisms. It seeks to bridge doctrinal traditions (e.g., Khalwatiyya) with historical sites, highlighting their legacy in confessional shifts and modern heritage revival.

Research analyzes. The research analyzes primary sources (hagiographies, epigraphy) and archaeological evidence to map khānqāhs' bifurcation post-1501: mystical preservation versus Shiʿi mobilization. It evaluates waqf sustainability via case studies (e.g., Shıxlar tombs, Abū Said's oil-funded hospice), architectural dualities, and figures like Sayyid Yaḥya al-Shirvani, revealing Sufism's synthesis of ethics and power in Azerbaijan's topography.

General information about Sufi Khānqāhs in Azerbaijan. In Azerbaijan, the Safavid conquest of Shirvan in the early sixteenth century catalyzed a bifurcation in Sufi ṭariqas: one strand preserved apolitical mysticism (e.g., muraqaba in the Khalwatiyya order), while the other instrumentalized khanqahs for Qizilbash militancy and proto-Shii mobilization, transforming sites like Ardabil and Baku into ideological strongholds. Structural analyses highlight expansive courtyards, libraries, and cells for khalwa, often patronized by rulers like Uzun Ḥasan to legitimize authority. Key figures – such as Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Ṭabrizi, Shaykh Ṣaḥib al-Zahid al-Gilani, Sayyid Yaḥya al-Shirvani, Shaykh Yusuf Ziya al-Din al-Miskuri, and Abu Said Abdal al-Bakuvi – exemplify localized Sufi vitality, with complexes like the Shirvanshahs' Palace ensemble and Shamakhi's domed mausolea serving dual palatial-mystical functions. Waqf paradigms, evidenced in oil revenues and sultanic firmans, underscore khanqahs' role in perpetuating spiritual legacies amid confessional shifts, Soviet disruptions, and post-independence revivals.

1. The emergence and general historical development of sufi khanqahs. The emergence of khanqahs (Sufi hospices or lodges) in Islamic history is intrinsically linked to the institutionalization of Sufi ṭariqas (orders), tracing its roots to the eleventh and twelfth centuries CE. This period marked a pivotal phase in the evolution of Sufism, as informal circles of spiritual seekers under the guidance of early masters transitioned into more structured communal institutions. The khanqah, derived from the Persian term for "house" or "lodging," served as a dedicated space for dervishes to convene, reflecting the broader maturation of mystical practices amid the socio-economic expansions of the Seljuk era. These establishments were strategically founded along major trade routes – such as the Silk Road arteries traversing Central Asia and the Iranian plateau – and at the confluences of caravan paths, where nomadic and mercantile flows intersected. Positioned in bustling hubs like Baghdad, Nishapur, and Tus, khanqahs functioned primarily as transient abodes for itinerant Sufis, offering respite from arduous journeys while fostering networks of spiritual exchange across vast distances. Their locational rationale was not merely pragmatic; it aligned with Sufism's ethos of peripatetic quest (safar dar tariq), wherein physical mobility symbolized the soul's inward pilgrimage toward divine union.

2. Internal activities and societal impact of khanqahs. Within these khanqahs, Sufi practitioners engaged in a multifaceted array of activities that extended far beyond mere shelter. Resident dervishes propagated their respective ṭariqas in surrounding locales through public discourses (sama) and performative rituals, including dhikr (remembrance of God) sessions that blended poetry, music, and ecstatic dance to evoke transcendent states. Simultaneously, these lodges provided sanctuary for fellow traveling Sufis, adherents of allied orders, and even lay pilgrims, embodying the inclusive hospitality (diyafa) central to Islamic mysticism. Intellectual and pedagogical dimensions were equally pronounced: khan-

qahs hosted rigorous theological debates, exegetical seminars on Quranic esotericism, and pedagogical transmissions of silsila (chains of initiation), thereby serving as de facto academies for moral and metaphysical cultivation. Economically, many were sustained through waqf endowments – inalienable pious foundations – that ensured autonomy from state patronage, allowing Sufi masters (shaykhs) to prioritize spiritual pedagogy over fiscal dependencies. This institutional resilience enabled khanqahs to weather political upheavals, from Abbasid declines to Mongol incursions, while disseminating Sufi ideals of ethical governance and social equity.

3. Transformations of sufi institutions in Azerbaijan during the Safavid era. In the specific context of Azerbaijan, the advent of the Safavids profoundly reshaped the trajectory of local Sufi ṭariqas, particularly following their conquest of Shirvan in the early sixteenth century. Azerbaijani historian M.S. Nematova observes that this geopolitical shift bifurcated the region's Sufi landscape into two divergent orientations. The first retained a purely mystical and devotional character, emphasizing introspective practices such as muraqaba (contemplation) and the cultivation of fana (annihilation in the divine), insulated from worldly entanglements. The second, however, veiled political contestation beneath a religious veneer, leveraging Sufi symbolism to mobilize disparate tribal and confessional factions against incumbent powers like the Aq Qoyunlu. This duality mirrored the Safaviyya order's own metamorphosis – from a fourteenth-century Sunni mystical fraternity founded by Shaykh Ṣafi al-Din in Ardabil, to a Twelver Shii militant vanguard under his descendants, culminating in Shah Ismail I's establishment of the Safavid dynasty in 1501. Shirvan, as a contested frontier blending Persianate, Turkic, and Caucasian influences, became a crucible for these tensions, with khanqahs in locales like Baku and Shamakhi evolving from esoteric retreats into nexuses of ideological fermentation.

The Safavid ingress into Azerbaijan accelerated this politicization, transforming khanqahs into veritable command posts for the Qizilbash (Red Head) militancy that underpinned the dynasty's consolidation. No longer confined to spiritual edification, these institutions orchestrated recruitment drives, disseminated proto-Shii propaganda through hagiographic narratives of Imam Ali, and coordinated guerrilla operations against Sunni rivals. Exemplified by the Ardabil khanqah – Safavid forebears' original seat – these lodges amassed vast waqf portfolios, including agrarian estates and urban properties, which financed military expeditions and cemented shaykhly authority as quasi-feudal. Yet, this instrumentalization engendered paradoxes: while empowering Safavid statecraft, it eroded the khanqah's apolitical sanctity, precipitating internal schisms and, by the seventeenth century, a Safavid backlash against unruly Sufi fraternities in favor of orthodox ulama. Nematova's analysis (Nematova, 1981: 11) underscores this pivot, illuminating how Shirvan's khanqahs, once beacons of universalist mysticism, became theaters of confessional realignment that indelibly inscribed Azerbaijan's socio-religious topography.

4. The formation and organization of sufi institutions. As the Sufi movement coalesced into a more formalized and institutionalized phenomenon during the medieval period, it engendered a pressing need for dedicated physical spaces and organizational frameworks to sustain its perennial activities. In the nascent phases of Sufism, practitioners convened in mosques (masjids) or private residences for communal zikr (remembrance of God) and esoteric instruction, reflecting the movement's initial informality and integration within broader Islamic devotional life. However, with the proliferation of discrete ṭariqas (Sufi orders) in the eleventh and twelfth centuries – exemplified by the emergence of structured lineages under charismatic shaykhs such as Abu Said ibn Abi al-Khayr – these ad hoc gatherings evolved into purpose-built institutions. These included the khanqah (Sufi lodge), ribaṭ (fortified hospice), takkiyya (convent), zawiya (hermitage or corner retreat), and dargah (portal or threshold abode), each adapting to regional linguistic and cultural idioms while fulfilling analogous spiritual imperatives.

The khanqah, etymologically rooted in the Persian for "house" or "inn," denoted a communal residence presided over by a shaykh or murshid (spiritual guide), where dervishes resided, performed devotional rites, and pursued the arduous path of ascetic discipline (riyaḍa). Similarly, the zawiya – derived from Arabic for "angle" or "nook" – signified a secluded corner for Sufi assemblies, often functioning interchangeably with the khanqah in peripheral or frontier settings (Munshi, 2009: 41). Historical accounts attribute the inaugural Sufi khanqah to the region of Ramla in Palestine during the eighth or ninth century CE, purportedly established under the auspices of early ascetics like Abu Hashim al-Kufi, a contemporary of Sufyan al-Thawri. This foundational edifice, possibly patronized by a Christian emir as a gesture of interfaith accommodation, rapidly disseminated across the Islamic oecumene – from the Levant to Transoxiana – mirroring the expansive networks of trade and pilgrimage that facilitated Sufism's percolation. By the Seljuk era, such institutions had proliferated, transforming transient waystations into enduring bastions of mystical pedagogy.

Beyond their liturgical primacy, takkiyyas transcended mere ritual enclaves to embody multifaceted nodes of holistic formation. They served as crucibles for Sufi tarbiyya (spiritual rearing), imparting not only esoteric doctrines of fana (annihilation in the Divine) and baqa (subsistence therein) but also profane sciences such as astronomy, medicine, and philology, thereby bridging the chasm between the exoteric (zahir) and esoteric (baṭin) dimensions of knowledge. Socially, these lodges dispensed almsgiving (sadqa) and itinerant succor, mitigating the exigencies of urban vagrancy and agrarian penury in an era of recurrent upheavals. Their economic sinews derived principally from waqf endowments – inalienable pious trusts – augmented by discretionary benefactions (ḥibat) and charitable largesse from affluent devotees, ensuring fiscal independence from capricious caliphal or sultanic patronage. Culturally, takkiyyas catalyzed efflorescences in contiguous domains: they nurtured the performative arts of sama (spiritual audition), wherein melodic invocations intertwined with poetry to induce ecstatic unveiling (kashf); fostered literary corpora in Persian and Arabic hagiography; and patronized iconographic traditions, albeit circumscribed by aniconic sensibilities. Internally, these institutions adhered to a rigorous ethos of adab (etiquette) and silsila (initiatic chains), stratified hierarchically from novice murid (disciple) to exalted mujtahid (adept), under the shaykh's vigilant oversight.

The doctrinal scaffolding of this Sufi institutionalism was first systematized by Abu Said Abu al-Khayr (d. 1049), the eponymous patron saint of Mayhana, who codified ten cardinal precepts for khanqah denizens – encompassing austerity, communal labor, and ethical reciprocity – thereby inaugurating a blueprint for conventual governance. This framework was subsequently elaborated in Shihab al-Din Umar al-Suhrawardi's (d. 1234) magnum opus, Awarif al-Maarif (The Gnoses of the Knowers), a seminal treatise that delineated the rites of initiation, the gradations of maqamat (spiritual stations), and the imperatives of fraternal solidarity within the Suhrawardiyya order, profoundly shaping subsequent ṭariqas across the Indo-Persianate world. Within the Azerbaijani Sufi continuum, these paradigms attained refined fruition through the exegetical labors of Sayyid Yaḥya al-Shirvani al-Bakuvi (d. 1464), a Khalwati luminary whose Miyar al-Ṭariqa (The Criterion of the Path) synthesized antecedent lore with indigenous exigencies, adapting principles of seclusion (khalwa) and invocation to the Caucasian milieu while fortifying the order's resilience amid Turco-Mongol flux (Mehmet Rıhtım, 2012: 185). Through such iterative codifications, Sufi institutions not only perpetuated the movement's vitality but also inscribed its indelible imprint upon the socio-spiritual fabric of pre-modern Eurasia.

5. Architectural features and patronage of khanqahs. From a structural perspective, khanqahs elicit considerable scholarly interest. Primarily, they feature expansive courtyards designed to facilitate intellectual discourses, encompassing within their confine's chambers dedicated to worship, dining halls, dormitories, and even libraries in certain instances. Shaykhs and murids (disciples) affiliated with specific Sufi ṭariqas resided therein, affirming their allegiance to spiritual guides (murshids) while conducting diverse religious and ethical instruction sessions. It merits note that certain khanqahs were either established or financially underwritten by ruling authorities. According to Khunji, Uzun Ḥasan "safeguarded frontier regions and ensured the security of trade routes, thereby protecting Islamic symbols and religious emblems. Renowned for his generosity and philanthropy, he founded over four hundred charitable institutions – zawiyas, ribaṭs, and khanqahs – and through these means secured the right to bequeath his throne to Yaqub Khan" (Khunji, 1987: 41). As evident, Uzun Ḥasan's measures to maintain border and route security – thereby bolstering political stability – were augmented by his patronage of charitable edifices, which amplified his religious and socio-economic influence. The construction of zawiyas, ribaṭs, and khanqahs may thus be appraised as instruments for both religious propagation and the legitimation of authority.

Khanqahs transcended their role as mere religious foci to integrate into the social and cultural fabric of society, playing a pivotal part in the dissemination of knowledge and spirituality. In the annals of Azerbaijani Sufism, the thirteenth – and fourteenth-century figures Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Ṭabrizi and his disciple Shaykh Ṣaḥib al-Zahid al-Gilani hold paramount significance, having pursued their endeavors in the Astara – Lankaran region. Sources attest to Sayyid Jamal al-Din's possession of a khanqah in the village of Pensar, though this structure has not endured to the present day; only his grave and a subsequently erected modest mausoleum remain. Shaykh Ṣaḥib, dispatched by his master for proselytization (irshad) to the village of Ḥaylakaran (later redesignated SHikhakaran) near Lankaran, possesses tombs both there and in the city of Lahijan within Iran's Gilan province – a circumstance that has engendered notable academic contention. Some scholars posit that one site may represent his actual sepulcher, the other a symbolic maqam (station) or khanqah, while others entertain the possibility of two distinct individuals bearing the name Shaykh Ṣaḥib. Referencing Munshi, Shaykh Ṣaḥib expired in the village of Siyav Rud (in Gilan) during the months of the year 700 AH (16 September

1300 – 5 September 1301 CE) and was interred on the premises (Munshi, 2009: 43). Excavations in the Lankaran necropolis have yielded ancient gravestones and remnants of brick constructions, corroborating the existence of a thirteenth-century khanqah or analogous religious-cultural sanctuary. Per Munshi, under Shah Abbas I, "the radiant mausoleum of the venerable Shaykh Ṣaḥib al-Gilani underwent comprehensive restoration" (Munshi, 2009: 606), underscoring anew the site's profound spiritual salience for the Safavid dynasty. Nonetheless, this locale was dismantled by Soviet authorities in 1944; following Azerbaijan's reacquisition of independence, local inhabitants have, in recent years, reconstituted it as a rudimentary mausoleum.

6. Specific sites and figures in Azerbaijani sufism. According to the preponderance of sources, the khanqah and mausoleum of Sayyid Yaḥya al-Shirvani are situated within the historic quarter of Icharishahar in Baku, integrated into the Shirvanshahs' Palace complex. The tomb, contiguous to the qibla wall of the Qeyqubad Mosque, is surmounted by an octagonal dome in the Seljuk architectural idiom. Drawing upon the insights of scholars such as A. F. Bakikhanov, Hoca Hilmi Huseynzade, M. A. Tarbiya, and others, this locale transcended the status of a mere devotional pilgrimage site to constitute a comprehensive Sufi-spiritual nexus – a khanqah ensemble encompassing a mosque, madrasa, khalwa (hermitage for seclusion), and ancillary structures. As a preeminent shaykh of the Khalwatiyya order, Sayyid Yaḥya al-Shirvani disseminated esoteric teachings, mentoring thousands of murids (disciples) and exerting profound influence within the Sufi milieus of Anatolia and Azerbaijan. The tomb's networked integration with the mosque, coupled with the ensemble's architectural configuration, corroborates its operation as a classical Sufi hub for dhikr (invocatory remembrance) and pedagogical transmission, consonant with entrenched mystical traditions. Collectively, these elements attest to Sayyid Yaḥya al-Shirvani's establishment of one of the principal centers of Sufi life in Baku.

Per Bakikhanov, "Regarding Mawlana Sayyid Yaḥya al-Bakuvi, it is known only to this extent that his name emerges among the luminaries of the ṭariqa in the mid-eighth century AH. His virtues and admirable qualities are renowned. In the city of Baku, adjacent to the mosque affiliated with him, his khalwa and madrasa endure to this day, as does his tomb" (Bakikhanov, 2001: 158). The mosque, khalwa, and madrasa associated with Sayyid Yaḥya in Baku exemplify the classical waqf paradigm: herein, personal or ṭariqa resources were perpetually consecrated for devotional, educational, and contemplative pursuits, sustained by revenues from petroleum and commerce, thereby underwriting the sustenance of madrasa students, the mosque's congregants, and khalwa dervishes. The tomb's incorporation into the waqf corpus further ensured the perpetuity of his spiritual legacy.

At the eastern entrance to the Shirvanshahs' Palace complex stands the monumental Crown Gate (Taj Qapı), a sixteenth-century edifice commissioned during the reign of Sultan Murad III by the Khalwati Ulu Rajab Baba al-Bakuvi. Epigraphic evidence, alongside the Sufi honorifics "Ulu" (Great) and "Baba" (Father), attests to this patron's affiliation with the Khalwatiyya initiatic chain. The gate's orientation – not toward the palace proper, but directly toward the locus of Sayyid Yaḥya al-Shirvani's mausoleum – furnishes grounds for positing its construction as the khanqah's ingress. Sources further document the proximity of the tomb to those of his son Fatḥ Allah and Shaykh Shukr Allah. Until the early twentieth century, the site accommodated sepulchers of several Sufi shaykhs and influential personages; archaeological investigations have unearthed numerous human remains within the mausoleum's crypt, affirming its function as a Sufi pilgrimage precinct. The Shah Mosque within the palace complex, augmented by diminutive cells contrived in its corners, constitutes compelling architectural testimony to the site's khanqah designation. The prospective utilization of these cells for khalwa aligns seamlessly with the Khalwatiyya's praxis of contemplative retreat. The adjacency of a hammam (bathhouse) to the ensemble further characterizes it as emblematic of canonical Sufi khanqah architecture.

In summation, the Qeyqubad Mosque, Shah Mosque, Crown Gate, mausolea, and khalwa cells furnish scholarly substantiation for the proposition that a portion of the Shirvanshahs' Palace precinct functioned dually as a Sufi precinct, particularly as the Khalwatiyya khanqah affiliated with Sayyid Yaḥya al-Shirvani, while the complex's remaining structures preserved their palatial remit – thereby evincing the coexistence of regal and mystical vocations (Mehmet Rıhtım, 2012: 185).

Situated to the south of Shamakhi, approximately 6 km from the city and in proximity to the village of Kalaxana, the mausoleum complex – spanning a 35-hectare expanse and comprising nine domes – dates to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, exemplifying the classical Shirvan architectural idiom characterized by octagonal forms and conical vaulting. The spatial and temporal context of the complex indicates its affiliation with shaykhs of the Khalwatiyya order; this is corroborated by references in the Lamaẓat to Khalwati shaykhs interred at the "Kumbad-qubur" (Domed Tombs) in Shamakhi. Only one of the

mausolea bears an inscription: "In this sepulcher is interred Shaykh Ibrahim ibn Amir Aḥmad, of the lineage of Shaykh Israfil among the Chilgar shaykhs, a shaykh graced by the Most High God. The oversight of the works (sarkar) is undertaken by Abd al-Aẓim son of Amir Ali. May God forgive him! The year one thousand seventy-four!" (Salamzada, 1964: 43). As evident, one of the domes is associated with the Sufi Shaykh Ibrahim, and per the inscription, the mausoleum was constructed in 1074 AH (1663–1664 CE) under the supervision of the architect sarkar-rank Abd al-Aẓim ibn Amir Ali. Six of the domes have survived intact to the present day. The presence of vaulted interconnecting chambers in the lower section suggests that the complex may have served dual functions as both a mausoleum and a khanqah (Mehmet Rıhtım, 2012: 191–192).

Yusuf ibn Ali al-Faḍil al-Ḥusayni, who lived in the fifteenth century, emerged as one of the principal representatives of the Khalwatiyya order in Shirvan, achieving renown as the Sufi Shaykh Yusuf Ziya al-Din al-Miskuri and serving as a disciple of Sayyid Yaḥya al-Shirvani. According to sources, Shaykh Yusuf resided and ultimately passed away in the village of Shıxlar, where several graves belonging to him and his descendants are extant. The shaykh's tomb is housed within a two-chambered, domed mausoleum: one chamber contains Shaykh Yusuf, the other his son Muḥammad Amin. Through his Arabic composition Bayan al-Asrar (Elucidation of the Mysteries), he expounded upon the rituals of the ṭariqa and Sufi ethics. Although historical sources exhibit discrepancies regarding his place and date of death, conducted research confirms that Shaykh Yusuf lived in SHıxlar village and that his lineage coalesced there. In the nineteenth century, a portion of his descendants relocated to the village of Seyidlar, where the lineage persists to this day (Mehmet Rıhtım, 2012: 192). Shaykh Yusuf Ziya al-Din al-Miskuri exemplifies the enduring legacy of Khalwatiyya Sufism in Shirvan, bridging esoteric ritual and ethical pedagogy through his seminal Bayan al-Asrar. His modest tomb in Shıxlar, shared with progeny, symbolizes the familial transmission of mystical authority, while the persistence of his lineage in Seyidlar underscores Sufism's resilient social fabric amid historical flux – a poignant reminder of how local shaykhs wove spiritual continuity into Azerbaijan's cultural tapestry.

Certain sources record that the later years of the Sufi Abu Said Abdal al-Bakuvi were spent in residence in Baku, where he also died. Drawing upon A. Bakikhanov, "Abu Said Abdal al-Bakuvi (Shaykh Abu Said) was, in the fourteenth century, a humble yet miracle-working and hospitable dervish who dwelt in seclusion outside Baku. With scant revenues from a modest oil well, he hosted guests and devoted himself to worship. Sultan Uljaytu Khudabanda (of the Ilkhanid era) was so astounded by his simplicity and hospitality that they entered into brotherhood and exchanged gifts. By sultanic decree, the Shiban oil well and arable lands were dedicated to his mausoleum. The subsequently dilapidated mosque, caravanserai, place of worship, and tomb were restored in 1817 by Ḥajji Qasim Bēg" (Bakikhanov, 2001: 158–159). The utilization of revenues from Abu Said's oil well (drilled within the Baku environs) to sustain his livelihood and the expenditures of wayfarers exemplifies the classical waqf paradigm, wherein personal property was channeled into societal benefaction (devotion, hospitality, and charity). The allocation of Shiban oil and crops to the mausoleum's wayfarers via sultanic firman attests to state protection and security. His grave is reported to lie at the site known as "Khalifa Dami," in proximity to the present-day Taza Pir Mosque. Ottoman Sultanic firmans of Murad III preserve references to Abu Said's tomb and waqfs in Baku. However, historical sources indicate that Abu Said Abu al-Khayr died in 440/1049 in Khurasan; accordingly, the Baku sepulcher and endowments may pertain to a descendant or murid, or to another Sufi bearing the same name. This hypothesis is fortified by a mausoleum in Ordubad, Nakhchivan, dedicated to a seventh-generation descendant of the same name (d. 1357) (Mehmet Rıhtım, 2012: 192).

Conclusion. The khanqahs of Azerbaijan represent a microcosm of Sufism's adaptive genius, intertwining spiritual introspection with socio-political agency to shape the region's religious topography. From their Seljuk-era genesis as beacons of universalist ethics to their Safavid-era politicization as crucibles of Shii identity, these institutions not only disseminated tarbiyya and adab but also mediated power dynamics, blending Persianate, Turkic, and Caucasian influences into a resilient cultural mosaic. Despite erosions from state interventions – be they Safavid orthodoxies or Soviet demolitions – their waqf-sustained endurance and architectural legacies, as seen in Baku's Icharishahar and Shamakhi's Kumbad-qubur, affirm Sufism's enduring capacity to foster communal equity and metaphysical quest. Contemporary restorations signal a renewed appreciation for these sites as bridges between heritage and modernity, inviting further interdisciplinary inquiry into how mystical spaces continue to inform Azerbaijan's post-Soviet spiritual renaissance.

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