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BOOK REVIEW

Hajj to the Heart: Sufi Journeys across the Indian Ocean

By: Scott Kugle. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022.

Midlaj Kodyathur¹²⁷

Scott Kugle's *Hajj to the Heart: Sufi Journeys across the Indian Ocean* (University of North Carolina Press, 2022) offers a profound exploration of the life and legacy of 16th-century Sufi scholar Sheikh Ali Muttaqi. By situating Sheikh Ali Muttaqi within the broader context of Sufi mysticism, the book highlights his enduring influence on the devotional and intellectual traditions of South Asia. Kugle adopts a multidisciplinary approach, combining historical, anthropological, and literary perspectives to analyze the practices and rituals central to Sufism. His nuanced analysis emphasizes both the localized and global dimensions of Sufi spirituality, presenting it as a living tradition that has shaped the region's cultural and moral landscapes.

The book also explores reformist critiques that reshaped traditional Sufi networks, alongside Sheikh Ali Muttaqi's spiritual and sociopolitical contributions, particularly his engagement with the politics of the early modern Gujarat Sultanate. By intertwining themes of spirituality, reform, and sociopolitical engagement, Kugle provides a holistic understanding of the dynamic interplay between Sufism and society in the Indian Ocean world. This dual focus situates Sheikh Ali Muttaqi as both a pivotal mystical figure and an active participant in his time's cultural and political milieu.

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Ultimately, *Hajj to the Heart* not only enhances our understanding of Sheikh Ali Muttaqi but also significantly enriches broader scholarship on South Asian Islam and Indian Ocean studies.

The first chapter introduces the foundational elements of Sheikh Ali Muttaqi's life and lays the groundwork for the book's exploration of reformist Sufism. It examines his personal development and the socio-political dynamics of Gujarat by engaging with hagiographical accounts and historical analysis. For example, the narrative emphasizes his transformative shift from traditional devotional practices to a focus on rational inquiry and scriptural knowledge, symbolized by his concept of a "Hajj to the Heart." The author underscores this transformation by stating, "Ali Muttaqi's journey reflected an inner pilgrimage, prioritizing sincerity over ritual," emphasizing that taqwa was more important than ritual or forms of dhikr (p. 37). This chapter also explores his interactions with Chishti traditions, the influence of reformist movements like the Mahdavi, and his critique of Sultan Bahadur Shah's rule, establishing a broader context for his eventual exile. Through these examples, the author effectively highlights Ali Muttaqi's role as a reformer, setting the stage for deeper discussions on his spiritual and intellectual contributions.

The second chapter delves into Ali Muttaqi's transformative journey of self-exile in Arabia, where he refined his intellectual and spiritual identity. This phase marked the synthesis of Sufi mysticism and juridical scholarship, giving rise to his distinctive "Sufi-jurist" model that emphasized sharia-compliant spirituality. His engagement with hadith studies in Mecca under prominent scholars like Ibn Hajar al-Haythami and Abul-Hasan al-Bakri placed him among the leading figures of the "era of consolidation and analysis" in Sunni tradition. This chapter also illustrates how 'Ali Muttaqi's spiritual lineage expanded through the Qadiri, Shadhili, and Madyani Orders, resulting in what his disciples later called the "triple tariqa."

Additionally, the chapter intriguingly connects Ali Muttaqi's experiences with those of Zayn al-Din Makhdum of Malabar, revealing a shared struggle against Portuguese incursions and their mutual involvement in broader Islamic networks. The personal connection between these two Sufi scholars from Gujarat and Malabar mirrors the actual military coordination of their era. Malabar's corsairs joined forces with the Ottoman fleets and the navy of Gujarat in 1538 in an organized attack on the Portuguese, forming what has been described as "an enormous transoceanic coalition, linking Istanbul with allies across the entire breadth of the Indian Ocean, from Shihr and Gujarat to Calicut and Sumatra" (p. 80). This interconnection emphasizes how intellectual and spiritual exchanges paralleled geopolitical resistance, underscoring the significance of Indian Ocean networks in shaping both scholarly and political responses to colonial threats.

The third chapter delves into 'Ali Muttaqi's growing influence as a reformist scholar. Here, his commitment to purging "excessive innovation" and eliminating mystic philosophical abstractions from Islamic thought is evident. His reformist Sufism was grounded in a balance between the sharia sciences and mystical practice, marking his maturation as both a spiritual leader and a critic of ecstatic Sufism. The fourth chapter focuses on his mission as an enforcer of sharia, where he confronts other Sufi movements like the Shattari and Mahdawi, vehemently rejecting their practices. These ideological clashes, coupled with political challenges, ultimately drive him to Mecca, where he finds refuge and further solidifies his authority.

Chapters five and six shift focus to Ali Muttaqi's intellectual legacy and its perpetuation through his disciples, who both promoted and critiqued his reformist ideas. These chapters illustrate how his vision of Sufism was institutionalized and how the enduring impact of his teachings extended far beyond his lifetime. The narrative of his "death satchel" symbolizes both the dissolution of his personal life and the profound influence of his reform movements. Together, these chapters provide a detailed account of his significant contributions to

the spiritual and scholarly landscape of the Indian Ocean world, demonstrating the lasting power of his intellectual legacy.

One compelling example from these chapters highlights the enduring spiritual bond between a Sufi master and his disciple, even after death, offering valuable insights for modern Sufi studies. The story of a disciple in Mecca seeking solace at the tomb of Shaykh Ali Muttaqi underscores this relationship. Troubled by anxieties, the disciple humbly sought guidance at the Shaykh's grave. That night, he dreamed of Shaykh 'Ali Muttaqi seated in authority near the Kaba, granting him the advice and reassurance he had sought. This poignant account sheds light on the possibilities within contemporary Sufi studies, emphasizing the continued relevance of these spiritual connections.

This book makes a significant contribution by integrating Sufism into the intellectual and political history of the Indian Ocean world. However, some aspects merit critique and further exploration. While his critiques of scholars like Nile Green and A. Azfar Moin are thought-provoking, his outright dismissal of their frameworks risks oversimplifying the multifaceted roles of Sufis in varying socio-political contexts. For instance, although the book adeptly highlights the ethical and reformist dimensions of Ali Muttaqi's Sufism, it gives limited attention to its broader cultural expressions, such as vernacular practices and its engagement with non-elite communities.

Moreover, the heavy reliance on theological and hagiographic sources enriches the archival depth but inadvertently privileges elite scholarly perspectives over grassroots interpretations. The book's focus on the sixteenth century, while significant, could benefit from comparative analyses with later reform movements to better illuminate the continuity and evolution of Sufi reformist ideas in South Asia. These gaps point to opportunities for future research to more comprehensively explore the intersections between Sufism's intellectual, cultural, and popular dimensions.

Despite these critiques, Kugle addresses significant gaps in the study of Ali Muttaqi and his intellectual legacy, challenging reductionist perspectives like Nile Green's view of Sufism as social capital tied to power. Kugle emphasizes the centrality of Sufi ethics (akhlaq) and disciplined comportment (adab) in shaping the political and intellectual life of the late Sultanate of Gujarat and early Mughal period. Rejecting A. Azfar Moin's portrayal of Mughal-era Sufis as proponents of superstition, he repositions Sufism as a deeply ethical and reformist movement with profound influence on Islamic scholarship and governance.

Drawing inspiration from Richard Eaton's social-historical methodology, Kugle uses biography not to glorify individual figures but to examine broader sociopolitical dynamics. By integrating theological, ethical, and hagiographic sources with historical chronicles, he situates Sufism as a transformative force in the Indian Ocean's sociopolitical and intellectual networks. Kugle's work effectively reclaims Sufism as an active and integral element of Islamic reform and governance, countering its marginalization in earlier historiographies and underscoring its relevance in South Asia's sixteenth century.

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