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Social Mysticism in the Transition to Modernity: Assessing the Social Role of Sufi Orders in the Qajar Period (With Particular Emphasis on the Safi Ali Shah Order and the Anjuman-i Ukhuwwat)

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Introduction
The Qajar period, owing to its distinctive characteristics, constitutes a significant phase in Iran's history and cultural development and, indeed, represents a turning point in the country's modern history. The political, social, and cultural transformations of this period have led scholars to regard it as the gateway to modernization in Iran and, consequently, to the encounter between tradition and modernity. During this period, Iranian society, following its exposure to Western culture, began to display signs of transformation, and many aspects of social life underwent substantial change. Given the significance of the Qajar period and the relative revival of mysticism and Sufism during this era, it is essential to examine the modes of social engagement of mystical and Sufi orders, their social dimensions, and their role in the transformations of Iranian society. Viewing Sufi orders as influential social and cultural institutions can deepen our understanding of the internal dynamics of Iranian society on the eve of its encounter with modernity. Moreover, examining the ways in which the mystical orders of the Qajar period responded to and interacted with modernity may offer insights into indigenous approaches to contemporary cultural and social challenges. Accordingly, this study employs a descriptive-analytical approach to examine the social role and activities of mystical and Sufi currents during the Qajar period, with particular emphasis on the Safi Ali Shah order and the Anjuman-i Ukhuwwat.

Research Findings
A reassessment of the role of social mysticism during this period demonstrates that Sufism in the Qajar era was not confined to the sphere of individual spiritual practice. Rather, through network-based structures, it played a significant role in the transmission of ideas, the cultivation of social ethics, and even cultural reform. As part of Iran's intellectual and cultural heritage, Sufism responded to modernity in diverse ways during this period. While some Sufi orders continued to pursue individual spiritual cultivation and the production of mystical-literary works, others,

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drawing upon indigenous models and responding to the circumstances of their time, adopted a more progressive orientation and sought to reconcile new developments with the mystical heritage. While preserving the identity and teachings of classical mysticism, these latter currents responded to the needs of their society by participating in the establishment of some of the earliest secret societies and political organizations and by undertaking extensive and significant efforts to create new opportunities for education, intellectual awakening, solidarity, and social participation. In this context, Zahir al-Dawla, through the establishment of the Anjuman-i Ukhuwwat and a range of political, social, and cultural activities at the Safi Ali Shah khanqah, extended the institution's function beyond the exclusively ṭarīqa-oriented sphere and introduced modernist and democratic forms of activity. Although the structural limitations of the Anjuman—including its dependence on aristocratic and courtly circles and its inability to develop into a broad-based popular movement—cannot be overlooked, the discrepancy between the organization's ostensibly non-political rhetoric and the political activities undertaken by some of its members also constituted a challenge in assessing its historical significance. Nevertheless, an evaluation of the Anjuman-i Ukhuwwat's performance in relation to four components of maximal social mysticism—rationality, spirituality, liberty, and justice—demonstrates that the organization was, in practice, able to move beyond a merely individual-oriented conception of mysticism and take steps toward a socially oriented form of mysticism. Despite its limitations, it can therefore be regarded as one of the relatively rare historical examples in the Qajar period of a transition from individual-oriented mysticism to socially oriented mysticism.

Conclusion

Mysticism and Sufism in the Qajar period, within the context of emerging social and political transformations, displayed diverse and sometimes contradictory forms of social engagement. These included both "traditional" approaches, such as the transmission of mystical teachings and the continuation of mystical literary production, and "progressive" approaches, including participation in political, social, and intellectual transformations and engagement with culture and the arts.Thus, drawing upon their cultural capacities, mystical and Sufi currents were neither passive in the face of global transformations nor categorically opposed to them. Rather, they acted as active agents of social engagement and reform.

Keywords: Sufism; Mysticism; Social Mysticism; Qajar Mysticism and Sufism.