

## Monitoring the Impact of Sufi Beliefs on Tribal Communities' Urban Connectivity in Shazly Village in Egypt's Eastern Desert.

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### Abstract:

The research studies the Sufi faith in the Islamic religion, as it is a religious philosophy that began with individual tendencies to achieve benevolence, but with the passage of time, its realization was associated with Sufi rituals and beliefs represented in collective organizations and architectural additions such as shrines and zikr circles, and beliefs directly affect the collective consciousness, whether religious and social, popular and cultural, and are reflected in the urban feature, such as the village of Al-Hassan Al-Shazli, which adopts the Islamic Sufi faith. The village is located in a geographically and architecturally isolated area in the desert of eyzab in the center of the eastern desert in the Red Sea region, and the choice of the location of the village is that it is located on the old pilgrimage route leading to Mecca, where Sheikh Abul Hassan Shadhli, founder of the Shadhili Sufi method, died while coming from his native Morocco on his way to perform the pilgrimage rites, and then turned into a shrine for religious tourism.

Through field studies and surveys of the urban context, major roads, classification of uses, monitoring the connectivity between the village site and other urban centers, and the impact of the religious shrine site on the surrounding tribal areas, this research emphasizes the need to create an urban fabric that is not limited to serving visitors to the shrine and ritual practices, but meets functional needs through an urban fabric that integrates the functions of tribal communities and takes into account the geographic and climatic nature of the region.

The research concludes by examining the impact of Sufi belief on the changing shape of the urban fabric of Sufi tribal communities. This includes monitoring the impact of belief on connectivity to surrounding urban areas and conceptualizing how to integrate all functions of the urban fabric as an approach to the urban development of isolated tribal areas.

### Keywords:

Sufi belief, urban connectivity, tribal communities.

### المخلص:

تعتبر تحقيق حاجات الإنسان العقائدية في إطار محددات المكان و العمران والقيم الاجتماعية والثقافية والعمراني من أهم خطوات التنمية العمرانية ويدرس البحث المعتقد الصوفي في الديانة الإسلامية حيث أنه فلسفة دينية بدأت بنزعات فردية لتحقيق الإحسان ولكن مع مرور ارتبط تحقيقها بطقوس ومعتقدات صوفية تتمثل في تنظيمات جماعية وإضافات معمارية مثل الضريح وحلقات ومدارس للذكر، والمعتقدات تؤثر بشكل مباشر على الوعي الجمعي سواء كانت دينية ومجتمعية شعبية وثقافية وتنعكس على النتائج العمراني كقرية الحسن الشاذلي التي تتبنى الفكر الصوفي الإسلامي حيث تحيط (الضريح الشاذلي) تجمعات قبلية تعاني من عدم الاتصالية العمرانية والعزلة الاجتماعية والفقر ونقص الموارد بسبب وقوع القرية بمنطقة معزولة جغرافيا وعمرانيا بصحراء عيذاب بوسط الصحراء الشرقية بإقليم البحر الأحمر ويكمن اختيار موقع القرية

تحت عنوان المؤتمر "الإنسان وتنمية الصحراء عبر التاريخ من الخليج الى المحيط" انها تقع علي طريق الحج القديم المؤدي الي مكة المكرمة حيث مات الشيخ أبو الحسن الشاذلي مؤسس الطريقة الصوفية الشاذليه وهوقادم من موطنه المغرب في طريقه لاداء مناسك الحج وتحولت بعد ذلك مزارا للسياحة الدينية .  
يؤكد هذا البحث ضرورة تهيئه نسيج عمراني لا يقتصر على خدمة زوار الأضرحة والممارسات الطقسية فقط بل يلبي الاحتياجات الوظيفية من خلال نسيج العمراني يحقق التكامل لوظائف التجمعات القبلية ومراعاة الطبيعة الجغرافية والمناخية للمنطقة وذلك من خلال الدراسة الميدانية والرفع العمراني للمحيط العمراني والطرق الرئيسية وتصنيف الاستخدامات ورصد الإتصالية بين موقع القرية والمراكز العمرانية الأخرى ومدى تأثير موقع المزار الديني على المناطق القبلية المحيطة. ويخلص البحث إلى وضع استقراء تأثير المعتقد الصوفي على تغير شكل النسيج العمران للمجتمعات القبلية الصوفية ورصد تأثيرالمعتقد على الإتصالية بالمراكز العمرانية المحيطة ووضع تصور لكيفية الدمج العمراني لكل وظائف النسيج العمراني كمدخل لتنمية العمرانية للمناطق القبلية المعزولة.

### الكلمات الدالة:

المعتقد الصوفي، الإتصالية العمرانية، المجتمعات القبلية.

### Research problem:

Failure to monitor the collective consciousness of the community and the accumulation of customs, traditions and rituals associated with the Sufi belief and address them with urban solutions leads to the lack of urban connectivity of the urban fabric of tribal communities with the surrounding urban centers, resulting in social isolation and stagnation of development.

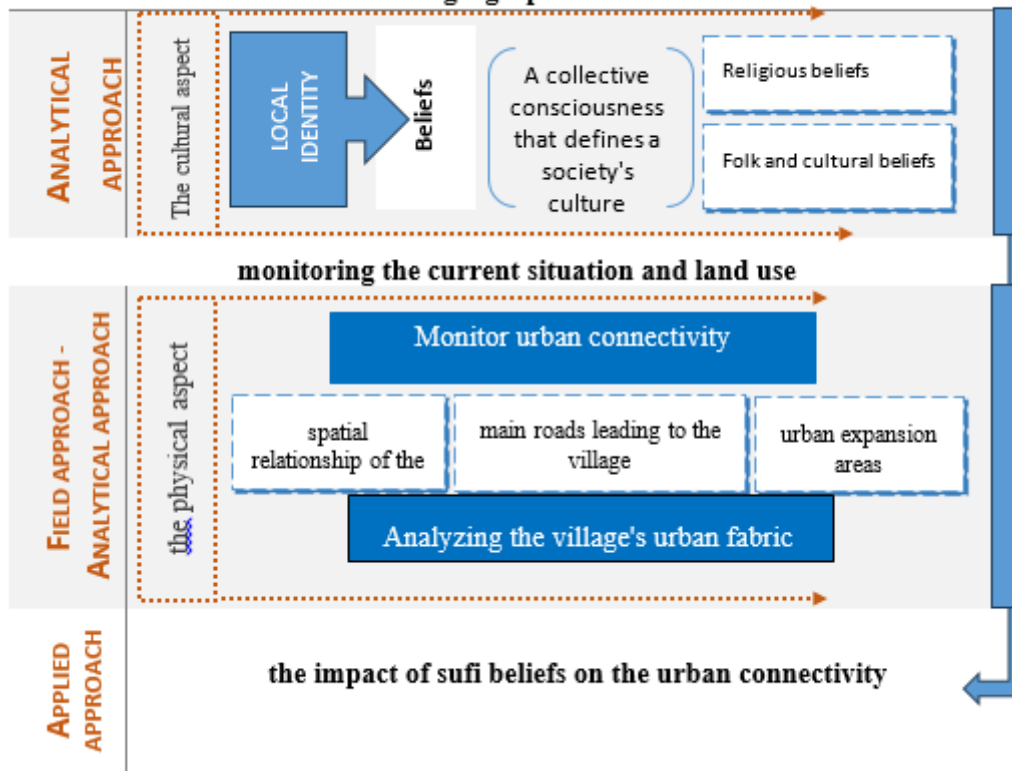
### Research aims:

The study examines the causes of urban discontinuity in isolated tribal societies and the impact of Sufi beliefs on social mobility, proposing the integration of urban form and beliefs without clashing with the environment and wasting resources, while ensuring individual, social, and national security and safety for the community.

### Methodology

The research employs a field approach to monitor the causes of urban discontinuity by surveying the components of the urban fabric of the study area with photos, videos, and interviews to identify the rituals and rites associated with the religious belief (Sufism) and popular beliefs of the Bedouin tribes, then the analytical and applied approach using simulation programs to document the association of beliefs with the urban fabric and the impact of this on urban development.

### monitoring the relationship between sufi belief and social and geographical isolation



## Introduction:

Culture is the result of the interaction between individuals and society within a given spatial context, including both natural and urban environments, in order to achieve human needs and fulfill material and spiritual requirements. Local culture plays a crucial role in determining urban formation and over time it becomes heritage.<sup>2</sup> The role of urban development is to positively engage with popular culture and beliefs while maintaining appropriate controls. Continuous evaluation and scrutiny within the context of the determinants of place and socio-cultural values, while also considering limited resource constraints.<sup>3</sup> It is important to avoid damaging the environment and wasting its resources, while ensuring individual, social, and national security for the community. The ultimate goal is to achieve sustainable city development and avoid urban isolation.<sup>4</sup>

The research examines the impact of Sufi beliefs on the urban fabric of tribal communities in the region through architectural and urban additions and the impact of changes in form on the development movement. While from the point of view of Islamic religious scholars, over time, Sufi schools and trends have multiplied and been associated with innovative rituals, which came to Muslims in the absence of science according to the founder of this method and the country of origin,<sup>5</sup> and from the general principles of the Sufi approach, which partially affects the shape of the subsequent urban fabric: \_

**-The Sufi way((Tariqa):** A person can access higher forms of religious knowledge but only under the guidance of a sheikh and a guide and by following the rules and rituals of his doctrine.

- Sufis believe that the Prophet Muhammad (**granted the right of guidance**) to only some of his companions, notably the caliphs Abu Bakr and Ali, who in turn passed this right on to their

followers. In this way, this right was passed on in an uninterrupted succession until the present day, and this succession is known as the chain (**silsilas**), and this method is associated with the belief.<sup>6</sup>

- **Dhikr**: It is a Sufi way of remembering God (**ALLAH**) by mentioning his name for proximity and worship. Rituals and practices associated with dhikr spread with the spread of poverty and ignorance, as it takes place in a square associated with the place where the saints are buried, believing that they are still an influential force, and in the eyes of the people that they are alive, and continue to intervene in favor of their people, and these places are called shrines, which is a building built for a dead body and next to his grave, in its surroundings what is called the dhikr circle was practiced.

- **(khalwah)**: The Qur'an attaches great importance to dhikr (remembrance of God) and prayer means following God's teachings and forbidding immorality and denial, and requires complete concentration and full remembrance of God. Sufis believe that the obligatory prayers at the time of the Prophet were performed with full concentration and thus called them a continuous attempt to reproduce this spirituality and worship, but in their own ways and methods; individual and group sessions are performed in a secluded place (spiritual retreat).<sup>7</sup>

With the mixing of societal religious (Sufi belief) and popular beliefs specific to the nature of Bedouin society where they are united by tribal provisions and individuals interact with society within their social relations and perceptions of life, the social accumulation of unconscious customs and traditions was reflected in the changes of connectivity. The urban fabric of the tribal community and the surrounding urban centers, and the case study on this Bedouin village of Shazli in the desert of Ayzab of the Red Sea region.<sup>8</sup>

This region represents an important center for Sufi religious tourism due to the presence of a shrine and Al-Shazly Mosque, which is linked to some Sufi movements in Egypt. However, it lacks the most basic resistance to life, as it is located in a remote area where temperatures reach 51 degrees Celsius in the summer, with a difference between day and night temperatures 16 Approximately 1 degree Celsius because it is located in the area of direct sunlight (hot, dry climate) and is also exposed to air pollution. The prevailing winds are northerly and northwesterly winds, which lead to the movement of sand, and the eastern mountains cause blocking of the winds without passing through the valley area ,thus making it an isolated area geographically and socially.

### **Urban connectivity between Al-Hassan Al-Shazli village and surrounding urban centers.**

Urban connectivity is considered an important aspect of human needs in Maslow's model, as the needs of security, belonging, self-realization, cognitive and aesthetic needs, so the transformations that appear in the formation of the urban fabric express the legislation and social systems that govern it.<sup>9</sup>

Determine the spatial relationship of the village to the surrounding cities:<sup>10</sup>

- The village is located in a remote and harsh mountainous region, 110km from the nearest point, Sheikh Salem Sanctuary, which is also isolated, and 40km from the urban centre, the city of Marsa Alam. (Fig.1)

- The distribution of these tribal communities is linked to the location of the shrine. Despite this, these communities suffer from extreme poverty and limited accessibility. (Fig.2)

Determine the main roads leading to the village:

- The village is situated in a remote urban area, as the road leading to it, is cul-de-sacs in the mountains with no direct connection to the Red Sea coast. (Fig.3)
- There are no urban centers along the road, as indicated by the shape of the sectors along the road. (Fig.5)

Determine the maximum limits of village buildings and urban expansion areas for residents:

- The village is situated in a mountainous area, with internal streets leading to blocked-off cul-de-sacs that end in the mountains, so most of the residents are nomadic Bedouins. (Fig.4-5-6)



**Fig.1 Urban survey of places of papyrus cultivation remaining .(Source: Satellite map edited by author)**



**Fig.2. Roads around the village of Shazli (Source: Satellite map edited by author. )**



**Fig.3 Satellite section A-A from Sidi Salem rest stop, to Al-Shazli village**



**Fig.4 section A-A (source: photograph by the author)**



**Fig.5 section B-B (source: photograph by the author)**



**Fig.6 section c-c -Village entrance) source: (source: photograph by the author)**

## 2: Analyzing the village's urban fabric:

The urban fabric is interwoven and reflects the level of urbanization and the social and economic pattern of the population. It includes three forms: Regular grid fabric in the direction of the shrine, the mosque, and the surrounding dwellings, the regular striped fabric in the Bedouin village, and the complex, irregular fabric in the dwellings of mobile Bedouins, and it is divided into four main areas. (Fig.7)

The first zone: The central area (Mosque and Shrine) is located in the center of the village between two mountains (Fig.8). The residents of the area choose the area specifically because it is located on the old pilgrimage route, believing that Sheikh Shazli died in this place while going on pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, and therefore it became a holy place and they built a mosque, shrine, dug a well for water, and degraded the mountain (Humaitra). Fig.9: Overlooking the mosque became sanctified by the Sufis.<sup>11</sup>



Fig.7 .Analysis of the urban fabric of Shazli village .(Source: Satellite map edited by author)



Fig.8 Al-Shazli shrine and mosque (source: photograph by the author )



Fig.9 The top of Jabal Hamithra mountain



Second zone :The area surrounding the mausoleum consists of a group of Sufi rest houses associated with the Shadhiliyya order and wraps around the mausoleum, and the design shows the position of the tomb of the rest house owner, called lovers or followers of the Shadhiliyya way, and inside is a courtyard where dhikr circles are held.



Fig.10 A model of the Sufi rest house building (source: photograph by the author)



Fig.11 The urban surroundings of Al-Shazli shrine and mosque (source: photograph by the author)



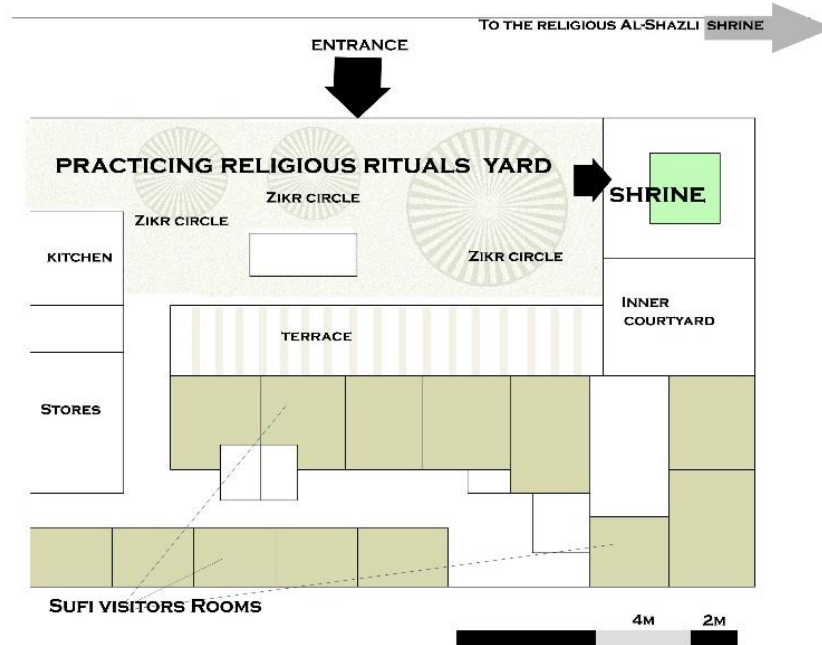


Fig.12 Illustration of Sufi Visitor Resthouse Design (source: the author)

-The third zone: The Bedouin village is made up of residential models of a single character, established by the Red Sea governorate for nomads, with a school, water tanks, a health center and a school attached to it.

- The fourth region: They constitute the largest percentage, 70% of the mobile Bedouin, who depend on herding and are at the service of visitors to the region and its gathering places around the shrine during the festival of al-Shazli born day, where they cause a burden on services and are exposed to food shortages unless aid is obtained.



Fig.13 Bedouin Village Grid Layout & Perspective (source: photograph by the author and Satellite map)



Fig.14 Nomadic settlements (source: Satellite photo)

**Results:**

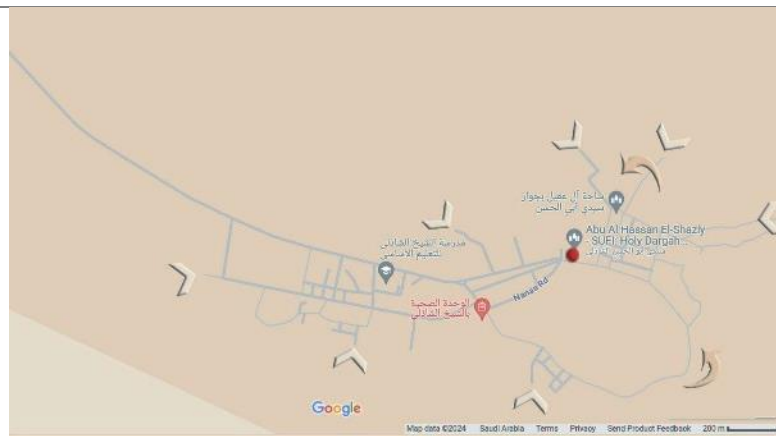
The spatial and geographical dimension is an important factor in choosing a Sufi establishment, as the mystic needs to apply the principles of The Sufi way((Tariqa), so they chose their places in isolation, either on the outskirts of cities, high mountains or the inner desert. An example of this is the village of Shazli, which constitutes a model for an integrated nomadic Sufi gathering reflected in an urban fabric, as its geographical location in the lower valley exposed to the danger of floods and surrounded by mountains from all directions. ( Fig.16). Where it is exposed to the intensity of thermal radiation and air pollution and is not applicable to urban expansion, where, despite being a destination for religious tourism, it is in social and cultural isolation, which exposes it to a decline in quality-of-life services and social development, and thus the impact of Sufi belief on the urban fabric is evident in the following:

**Roads and buildings Pattern:** A centralized direction to (the religious shrine) obstructs urban connectivity, urban centers on the road between the coast and the village, and internal streets with closed ends toward the mountains. (Fig.15)

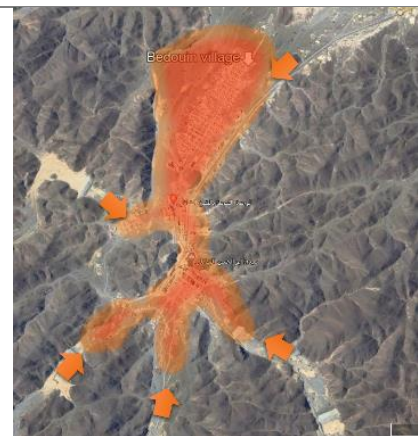
**Population density:** It is concentrated around the mosque and the shrine, and most of them are rest houses owned by followers of the The Sufi way (Tariqa), who believe that they are blessed by their proximity to the shrines and take the mountains as their natural boundaries, making it difficult for urban expansion and obtaining various jobs.

**Building Style:** The prevalence of rest houses designed to serve Sufi purposes only, as they contain the tomb of the rest house owner, who overlooks a courtyard for practicing dhikr circles, and over time transforms from an ordinary person to a wali, using his tomb for blessings. ( Fig.10-11)

**Housing characteristics** that target only one type of building (rest houses) to serve Sufis, as it consists of accommodation rooms and a courtyard overlooking the tomb. This was reflected in daily life, as jobs were limited to serving visitors only, and the appearance of tents and tin nests spread unplanned to accommodate nomads who are unsettled to do the same work. (Fig.12)



**Fig.15 Shazli Village Roads** One central road around the shrine and closed-ended secondary roads (Source: Satellite map edited by the author)



**Fig.16 Village location at the bottom of the valley** (Source: Satellite map edited by the author)



**Recommendation:**

**In general:** Achieving urban connectivity through a road network that connects urban centers and reduces social isolation, thus ensuring social continuity and acceptability between different cultures and sects while maintaining a sustainable urban form that achieves accessibility, proximity and integration of functions.

**-Comprehensive development :** By proposing the improvement and construction of several roads to ensure urban connectivity with the surrounding urban centers as follows:

Increasing the efficiency of the crossroads

**1<sup>st</sup> road :** Which connects the village to the Red Sea coast until it reaches Marsa Alam city. It passes through the district of Sheikh Salem.( Fig.17)

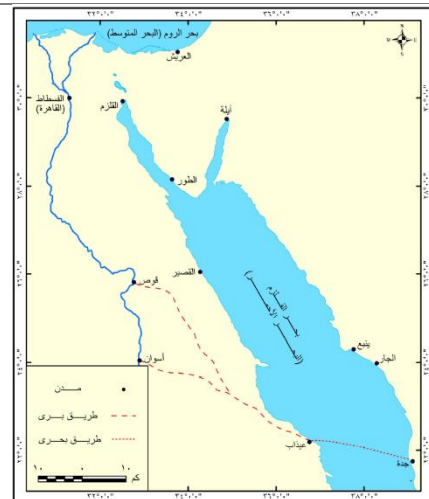
**2<sup>nd</sup> road :** Which connects the Nile Valley (Aswan City) to the village to facilitate accessing services.( Fig.17)

**3<sup>rd</sup> road:** To solve the problem of the village's isolation due to the closed road, propose a road connecting Wadi Ghosoun area on the Red Sea coast directly to the village.( Fig.18)

**4<sup>th</sup> road:** Revive the ancient pilgrimage route and connect it to an international port, as it used to pass through this area via the port of Ezab, one of the most important Egyptian commercial ports on the Red Sea coast in the Middle Ages, for 200 years, pilgrims from Egypt and Morocco have traveled this route to perform the Hajj. This route played an important role in global trade from east to west. In addition, the main trade routes through Egypt's eastern desert ended at this port, making it the main port of destination for pilgrims traveling to the Holy Land and thus the village transformed into an urban center near the coast and a resting place for pilgrims to Mecca, and to visit the tomb and mosque as symbols of Islam (Imam Hassan Al-Shazli) rather than being a destination in itself.( Fig.18)



**Fig.17 Urban connectivity road proposals (Source: Satellite map edited by the author)**



**Fig.18 The Old Egyptian Pilgrimage Trail (source: Abdul Ghani Ziadeh, The Medieval Port of Ezab, Faculty of Arts/Cairo University,2014.**

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**- Urban containment:**

- Integrating land uses, distributing green areas and equitably distributing residential densities.
- Emphasizing the importance of urban mass transportation by bus as one of the most fundamental indicators of urban development, reducing isolation and integrating isolated areas and fringe areas into the city.

**- Urban design:**

- Adopting strip planning rather than centralized planning to equitably distribute and connect services.
- Securing mountainous areas with urban perimeters to prevent avalanches or outlawed weather practices.
- Proposing agricultural areas in the low valley and in the direction of the floodway to minimize environmental risks and reduce temperatures.
- Establishing special requirements for the design of Sufi guest areas to include a courtyard for religious seminars and dhikr circles that are not associated with a shrine or tomb in addition to building a hotel with thoughtful architectural standards instead of individual addition.

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