Sultanates and Sufis in South Asia: An Analytical Study of Suhrawardi Order in Delhi Sultanate

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Keywords	Abstract
Baha-ud-Din Zakariya; Suhrawardi Order; Balban; Delhi Sultanate; Iltutmish; Sufi–State Relations; Political Patronage; Khanqah System; Medieval South Asia; Islamic Governance	This study examines the political and spiritual interactions between Baha-ud-Din Zakariya of Multan, the leading figure of the Suhrawardi Sufi order in South Asia, and two prominent Delhi Sultanate rulers, Sultan Iltutmish (r. 1211–1236) and Sultan Balban (r. 1266–1287). Unlike the Chishti order's deliberate distance from state affairs, the Suhrawardi approach under Zakariya embraced selective political engagement, state patronage, and mediation in administrative matters. Through his khanqah in Multan, Zakariya established a structured spiritual institution that also functioned as a hub of political influence, facilitating the integration of Sufi authority within the Sultanate's governance model. Drawing on historical chronicles, Sufi biographies, and secondary scholarship, this paper analyzes how Zakariya's relationship with the Delhi court shaped both religious authority and state legitimacy. The findings reveal that these interactions not only reinforced the Sultanate's control over frontier regions but also redefined the role of Sufis as active participants in the political and administrative life of medieval India.

Introduction

The relationship between the Suhrawardi Sufi order—particularly Baha-ud-Din Zakariya of Multan—and the Delhi Sultanate under rulers like Iltutmish and Balban is a key chapter in the history of Sufi-state interactions in medieval India. Baha-ud-Din Zakariya (d. 1262), founder of the Suhrawardi khanqah in Multan, is renowned for his engagement with political authorities, contrasting with the more aloof stance of the Chishti order. His khanqah became a center of both spiritual and political influence, and his interactions with Iltutmish (r. 1211–1236) and Balban (r. 1266–1287) exemplify the complex, often mutually beneficial, relationship between Sufi leaders and the Sultanate. Zakariya's approach—marked by acceptance of state patronage, mediation in political affairs, and a hierarchical khanqah structure—helped integrate Sufi authority into the Sultanate's framework, shaping the religious and political landscape of the period. This review synthesizes the available scholarship on these interactions, highlighting the distinctive Suhrawardi approach to statecraft and its implications for the Delhi Sultanate (Qudosi 1996).

The *Suhrawardi* order emerged as one of the most influential Sufi traditions in South Asia during the 13th century, particularly through the efforts of *Baha-ud-Din Zakariya*, who established its foundation in Multan. The order traced its spiritual lineage to Shaikh Shihab-ud-Din Suhrawardi of Baghdad and was characterized by a structured, hierarchical organization and a willingness to engage with political authorities (Shāhnavāz Khān Awrangābādī 1979). Unlike the Chishti order, which often maintained distance from rulers, the *Suhrawardis* accepted state patronage and sometimes facilitated the appointment of successors through the involvement of the

ruling elite (Mohammad Dilshad Mohabbat, A. Hussain, Shazia Ihsan 08/2021).

The Suhrawardi khanqahs (spiritual lodges) in Multan and surrounding regions became centers of both spiritual guidance and political influence. Notable figures such as Shaikh Rukn-e-Alam, a descendant of Baha-ud-Din Zakariya, continued this legacy, fostering inclusiveness, compassion, and unity among diverse communities. The order's leaders were known for their charitable works, mediation in conflicts, and close relationships with sultans and governors, which helped integrate Sufi authority into the broader governance of the region (Naz 09/2024) (Mohammad Dilshad Mohabbat, A. Hussain, Shazia Ihsan 08/2021).

Architecturally, the Suhrawardi order left a significant mark through the construction of distinctive shrines and khanqahs, which became important pilgrimage sites and symbols of enduring spiritual and social influence (Hasan Ali Khan September 2016). The order's practices emphasized adherence to Islamic law (sharia), spiritual discipline, and a pragmatic approach to worldly affairs, contributing to its widespread acceptance and impact on the socio-cultural fabric of medieval South Asia (Bhattacharya 2010).

However, the Suhrawardi order played a pivotal role in shaping the spiritual, social, and political landscape of South Asia, blending religious authority with active engagement in governance and community life.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the nature and extent of political interactions between the Suhrawardi order, represented by Baha-ud-Din Zakariya, and the Delhi Sultanate.

2. To examine the mutual benefits and strategic purposes of these relations for both the Sultanate and the Suhrawardi order.

3. To compare the Suhrawardi model of state engagement with the Chishti order's non-political approach.

4. To assess the impact of these relations on the Sultanate's legitimacy and administrative control, particularly in Multan and frontier regions.

Research Questions

1. What political, religious, and strategic factors encouraged the Suhrawardi order's engagement with the Delhi Sultanate?

2. How did Baha-ud-Din Zakariya's relationship with Iltutmish and Balban influence state policy and frontier governance?

3. In what ways did state patronage shape the institutional growth and influence of the Suhrawardi order?

4. How did the Suhrawardi political approach differ from that of other major Sufi orders, especially the Chishti order?

This study engagements a historical-analytical approach, combining narrative reconstruction with critical analysis of primary and secondary sources to examine the political relations between the Suhrawardi order and the Delhi Sultanate. The historical dimension traces the chronology of events, personalities, and contexts surrounding Baha-ud-Din Zakariya's interactions with Sultans Iltutmish and Balban, while the analytical dimension interprets these interactions in light of political, religious, and socio-cultural dynamics of the 13th century.

Primary sources include medieval chronicles such as *Tabaqat-i Nasiri* by Minhaj-i Siraj Juzjani, *Tarikh e Farishta* by Muhammad Qasim Farishta, and other contemporary court histories; Sufi hagiographies and malfuzat (sayings) associated with the Suhrawardi order; and records of waqf grants and patronage. These sources provide firsthand accounts of political events, court–Sufi interactions, and the spiritual-political environment of the period.

Secondary sources comprise modern historical analyses, scholarly monographs, and *journal articles on Sufism in South Asia, the Delhi Sultanate's political structure*, and the Suhrawardi order's doctrinal orientation. The study critically evaluates these works to identify historiographical trends, reconcile conflicting narratives, and situate the Suhrawardi–Sultanate relationship within the broader framework of Sufi–state relations in medieval South Asia.

Significance of Baha-ud-Din Zakariya in Multan

Baha-ud-Din Zakariya holds a central place in the spiritual, cultural, and socio-political history of Multan. As the founder of the Suhrawardi order in South Asia, he transformed Multan into a major center of Sufism and Islamic learning during the 13th century (Al-Hasni, *Nuzhat al-Khawātir wa Bahjat al-Masāmiʿ wa al-Nawāẓir* 1999).

Spiritual and Educational Influence

a) Baha-ud-Din Zakariya established the Suhrawardi order in Multan after extensive religious education in renowned centers like Khurasan, Bukhara, and Baghdad. He was initiated by Shaikh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi and brought a structured system of Sufi thought to the region (Qudosi 1996, Al-Hasni, *Nuzhat al-Khawātir wa Bahjat al-Masāmiʿ wa al-Nawāẓir* 1999).

b) His khanqah (spiritual lodge) became a hub for mystical, educational, and literary activities, attracting disciples and scholars, and fostering the spread of Sufi teachings (Nizami 2002).

Socio-Political and Economic Impact

a) Zakariya's leadership coincided with Multan's rise as a significant trade and cultural crossroads, connecting India with Iran and Central Asia. His influence extended beyond spirituality, as he engaged with political authorities and played a role in regional governance (Subramony 08/2029) (Al-Hasni, *Nuzhat al-Khawātir wa Bahjat al-Masāmiʿ wa al-Nawāẓir* 1999).

b) He is noted for mediating between local communities and rulers, and his order's pragmatic approach to politics distinguished it from other Sufi groups (Muhammad Touseef, Alexandre Papas 2019).

Enduring Legacy

a) The mausoleum of Baha-ud-Din Zakariya remains a prominent landmark and pilgrimage site, symbolizing Multan's identity as the "City of Saints" (Khan 1985).

b) His legacy continues through the ongoing prominence of Sufi brotherhoods and the city's reputation as a center of spiritual heritage (Muhammad Touseef, Alexandre Papas 2019).

Baha-ud-Din Zakariya's significance in Multan lies in his foundational role in establishing the Suhrawardi order, shaping the city's spiritual and cultural landscape, and integrating Sufi authority into the region's social and political fabric. Multan is known as the "City of Saints" due to its rich heritage of saints, including Sheikh Bahauddin Zakariya, Shah Rukn-e-Alam, Shamsuddin Sabzwari Multani, and Muhammad Shah

Yusaf Gardez and Shams (Sobia Khan, Monazza Hayat 2021).

Political Setting of the Delhi Sultanate under Iltutmish and Balban

The reigns of Sultan Iltutmish (1211–1236) and Sultan Balban (1266–1287) represent two formative phases in the consolidation of the Delhi Sultanate. Iltutmish, the third ruler of the Mamluk (Slave) dynasty, secured the Sultanate's political foundations after a period of instability following Qutb al-Din Aibak's death. His reign was marked by the suppression of rival claimants, the subjugation of regional governors, and the successful defense of the realm against Mongol incursions on its northwestern frontier. Importantly, Iltutmish sought to enhance the legitimacy of his rule through recognition from the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad, a move that strengthened the symbolic Islamic character of the Sultanate (Malik 2020).

Balban's rule, emerging after a period of internal factionalism, was characterized by a highly centralized and autocratic model of governance. As a former military commander and vizier, Balban implemented strict court protocol, reinforced the authority of the sultan through the doctrine of *Zill-e-Ilahi* (Shadow of God), and pursued an uncompromising policy toward rebels and frontier threats. His reign emphasized law and order, administrative discipline, and the projection of royal power, particularly in volatile border regions such as Punjab and Sindh—areas where Sufi networks, including the Suhrawardi order in Multan, played a strategic role in stabilizing local populations (Malik 2020, Farishta 2008).

In this political environment, the relationship between the Delhi court and influential Sufi leaders like Baha-ud-Din Zakariya was not merely spiritual but deeply entwined with the state's frontier policy, legitimacy-building, and administrative integration.

While the Chishti order's non-political stance in medieval India has been extensively studied for its deliberate avoidance of political entanglement, emphasizing spiritual autonomy and distance from state affairs (Bhattacharya 2010, Farishta 2008), the Suhrawardi order's active engagement with the Delhi Sultanate remains underexplored. In particular, the political role of Baha-ud-Din Zakariya of Multan during the reigns of Iltutmish and Balban has not received sufficient analytical attention (Bhattacharya 2010, Farishta 2008). This gap limits our understanding of how Sufi-state relations shaped governance, religious legitimacy, and frontier stability in the 13th century.

Origins and Arrival of the Suhrawardi Order in the Subcontinent

The Suhrawardi order traces its origins to the teachings of Abu al-Najib al-Suhrawardi (d. 1168) in Baghdad and reached its institutional maturity under his nephew, Shihab al-Din Abu Hafs 'Umar al-Suhrawardi (d. 1234), author of the influential Sufi manual *ʿAwarif al-Maʿarif* (Al-Hasni, *Nuzhat al-Khawātir wa Bahjat al-Masāmiʿ wa al-Nawāẓir* 1999). The order emphasized a Sharia-based spiritual life, organizational discipline, and an openness to measured engagement with political authority, setting it apart from more renunciatory Sufi traditions (Carl W. Ernst, and B. Lawrence Bruce 2002).

The Suhrawardi *silsila* entered the Indian subcontinent in the early 13th century, carried by disciples and missionaries linked to the Baghdad khanqah (Eaton 1978) (Al-Hasni, *Nuzhat al-Khawātir wa Bahjat al-Masāmiʿ wa al-Nawāẓir* 1999). Among its most prominent representatives was Baha-ud-Din Zakariya of Multan (d. 1262), a direct disciple of Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi.

Having studied in Baghdad, Zakariya brought with him both the doctrinal framework of the order and its model of structured spiritual institutions (Digby 1986).

Multan, located at the crossroads of trade and pilgrimage routes and serving as a strategic frontier city for the Delhi Sultanate, provided fertile ground for the order's establishment (Schimmel 1980). Zakariya's khanqah in Multan became not only a center for religious instruction and spiritual training but also a hub for political engagement, reflecting the Suhrawardi conviction that cooperation with rulers could advance both religious and administrative stability (Eaton 1978). By the mid-13th century, the Suhrawardi order had become a significant religious and political force in northwestern India, distinct from the more politically aloof Chishti order centered in Delhi and Ajmer (Nizami 2002). (Al-Hasni, *al-Hind fī al-Hind al-Islāmī* 2001)

Multan's Strategic, Political, and Spiritual Role in the 13th Century

In the 13th century, Multan held a pivotal position in the Delhi Sultanate's political geography. Situated at the junction of trade routes linking Central Asia, Persia, and northern India, it functioned as both a commercial hub and a frontier garrison city (Eaton 1978). Its proximity to the northwestern frontier meant that control over Multan was crucial for securing the Sultanate against Mongol incursions and for maintaining influence over the Punjab region (Jackson 1999). As a result, the city frequently figured in the strategic calculations of rulers like Iltutmish and Balban, who invested in its defense and administrative integration.

Beyond its military and economic significance, Multan emerged as a major spiritual center during this period. The city had long been associated with Islamic learning, attracting scholars, jurists, and mystics from across the Muslim world (Schimmel 1980). The establishment of the Suhrawardi khanqah by Baha-ud-Din Zakariya in the early 13th century elevated Multan's religious profile, transforming it into a focal point for Sufi–state collaboration (Digby 1986). The khanqah not only provided spiritual instruction and moral guidance but also mediated disputes, served as a distribution point for charitable endowments, and acted as a political intermediary between the Sultanate and local communities (Nizami 2002).

This combination of strategic location, political relevance, and spiritual authority made Multan unique within the Delhi Sultanate's domain. It was both a bastion of frontier defense and a beacon of religious legitimacy, a dual role that facilitated the integration of Sufi networks into the Sultanate's governance structure (Eaton 1978). In this way, Multan became an arena where political power and spiritual authority intersected, shaping the trajectory of both regional politics and the spread of Sufism in South Asia.

The early Delhi Sultanate (1206–1290) witnessed the gradual integration of Sufi networks into the political and social fabric of northern India. While the Turkish rulers brought with them Central Asian traditions of seeking legitimacy through religious endorsement, the diverse Sufi orders arriving in the subcontinent adapted their strategies to the Indian environment (Eaton 1978). This period saw the parallel development of two distinct approaches to political authority among Sufi orders: the Chishtis, who generally maintained a policy of political aloofness, and the Suhrawardis, who embraced a more engaged and cooperative stance toward state power (Nizami 2002).

The Sultanate–Sufi relationship was shaped by mutual needs. For the rulers, association with prominent Sufi shaykhs enhanced their moral authority and helped consolidate control over newly acquired territories, particularly in frontier regions (Digby 1986). For Sufi leaders, measured engagement with the court provided resources for charitable works, opportunities to mediate disputes, and influence over the administration of waqf endowments (Trimingham 1971.) (Farishta 2008).

These interactions were not without tension. Some Sufis resisted political patronage, fearing compromise of their spiritual independence, while others saw state support as a means to strengthen religious institutions and extend their influence (Carl W. Ernst, and B. Lawrence Bruce 2002). In this context, the Suhrawardi order under Baha-ud-Din Zakariya represented a model of selective cooperation, using political connections to reinforce both spiritual authority and communal welfare. This pragmatic approach set the stage for the close and consequential ties between Zakariya's Multan khanqah and the Delhi Sultanate under Iltutmish and Balban.

Baha-ud-Din Zakariya's Political Engagement

Relationship with Sultan Iltutmish

Baha-ud-Din Zakariya's association with Sultan Shams al-Din Iltutmish (r. 1211–1236) marked one of the earliest examples of formalized cooperation between a major Sufi leader and the Delhi Sultanate. Historical sources indicate that upon Zakariya's return from Baghdad to Multan, Iltutmish recognized his scholarly and spiritual stature, granting him **madad-i ma'ash** (land revenue assignments) to support his khanqah and charitable activities (Digby 1986, Nizami 2002). These endowments ensured a steady financial base for the Suhrawardi network in Multan, allowing Zakariya to maintain a structured and hierarchical institution that could serve both religious and administrative functions.

The Sultan's patronage extended beyond financial support. Zakariya was reportedly entrusted with mediating disputes between local elites and the Sultanate's representatives, particularly in the politically sensitive frontier regions (Eaton, The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier 1204–1760 2003). His authority among local populations made him an effective intermediary, capable of securing loyalty to the Sultan while also safeguarding community interests. This role reflected the Suhrawardi conviction that selective engagement with rulers could serve both spiritual and worldly stability (Trimingham 1971, 166–167).

While the Chishti shaykhs of the same period declined such political involvement, Zakariya's willingness to accept court patronage and engage in governance matters demonstrated a pragmatic approach that aligned with the needs of a frontier city like Multan. His relationship with Iltutmish thus laid the foundation for a model of Sufi–state collaboration in which spiritual authority and political power reinforced one another, setting a precedent for later interactions with rulers such as Sultan Balban.

By the time Ghiyas al-Din Balban (r. 1266–1287) rose to power, Baha-ud-Din Zakariya's khanqah in Multan had become an established institution with both spiritual and administrative influence. Balban, facing persistent threats from Mongol incursions along the northwestern frontier, recognized the strategic importance of Multan as both a military outpost and a center of local authority (Al-Hasni, al-Hind fī al-Hind al-Islāmī 2001). Zakariya's standing among the frontier tribes and urban elites positioned him

as a valuable ally in securing loyalty to the Sultanate.

Sources indicate that Zakariya provided counsel on matters of frontier defense and mediated between the Sultan's officials and local power holders, helping to stabilize an otherwise volatile region (Nizami 2002, 98–99). His ability to mobilize community support through religious influence complemented Balban's military strategy, which relied on fortified outposts and disciplined frontier administration (Eaton 2003, 77–78).

Balban's reliance on Zakariya was not merely tactical. The Sultan valued the Suhrawardi leader's capacity to legitimize state authority in a region where political control was tenuous. In this arrangement, Zakariya's role extended beyond spiritual guidance; he functioned as a trusted political advisor whose authority could bridge the gap between imperial power and local autonomy. This cooperation exemplified the Suhrawardi model of integrating spiritual leadership with the practical requirements of governance, a dynamic that reinforced both the Sultanate's frontier control and the prestige of Zakariya's khanqah.

Nature of Suhrawardi Political Theology (Sharia with Political Cooperation)

The Suhrawardi order's political theology combined strict adherence to the principles of Sharia with a pragmatic openness to political cooperation. Rooted in the teachings of Shihab al-Din Abu Hafs 'Umar al-Suhrawardi (d. 1234), as outlined in *Awarif al-Ma'arif*, this approach emphasized that spiritual life should be firmly grounded in Islamic law, while recognizing the ruler's role as a protector of the faith and guarantor of social order (Trimingham 1971, 165–166; Ernst 1997, 59–60).

Unlike the Chishti model, which often sought to maintain distance from state authority to preserve spiritual independence, the Suhrawardi vision regarded selective engagement with rulers as a legitimate means of furthering both religious and societal stability (Nizami 2002, 90–92). Political cooperation was framed not as subservience to worldly power but as a form of *maslaha* (public interest), whereby Sufi leaders could influence governance, protect community welfare, and mediate conflicts without compromising their commitment to Sharia norms.

Baha-ud-Din Zakariya embodied this political theology in his dealings with the Delhi Sultanate. His acceptance of land grants and his role in frontier mediation were not seen as deviations from spiritual ideals but as extensions of his responsibility to uphold justice, ensure security, and facilitate the Sultanate's alignment with Islamic legal and moral principles (Eaton 2003, 75–76). This integration of Sharia-based spirituality with pragmatic state engagement allowed the Suhrawardi order to serve as both a religious authority and an instrument of political stabilization in medieval India.

Analytical Discussion

Comparison with Chishti Order's Political Aloofness

The Suhrawardi order's willingness to engage with political authorities stands in marked contrast to the Chishti order's well-documented preference for political aloofness in the Delhi Sultanate period. The Chishti shaykhs, particularly figures like Qutb al-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki (d. 1235) and Baba Farid al-Din Ganj-i Shakar (d. 1265), consistently declined royal patronage, land grants, and formal roles in governance (Nizami 2002, Lawrence 1981). This detachment was rooted in their ascetic ethos, which valued independence from the

potentially corrupting influence of temporal power, as well as their commitment to serving the poor without state interference.

In contrast, Baha-ud-Din Zakariya's Suhrawardi model actively incorporated political cooperation as a tool for advancing both Sharia-based spiritual life and public welfare. His acceptance of madad-i ma'ash grants, mediation in frontier disputes, and advisory role to rulers like Iltutmish and Balban reflected a belief that political engagement, if guided by religious principles, could serve the *maslaha* (public interest) and strengthen the moral fabric of governance (Eaton 2003, 75; Trimingham 1971, 165–166).

This divergence in approach also shaped the geographical and political footprint of each order. While the Chishtis consolidated their influence primarily in the cultural heartlands of Delhi and Ajmer, the Suhrawardis extended their reach into frontier zones like Multan, where political instability required close cooperation between spiritual leaders and the state. Consequently, the Suhrawardi strategy fostered a symbiotic relationship between khanqah and court, whereas the Chishti approach preserved the independence of the khanqah but limited its direct political leverage (Ernst 1997).

The comparison underscores two viable yet contrasting models of Sufi–state relations in medieval India: one that sought legitimacy and stability through integration with state mechanisms, and another that preserved moral authority through deliberate detachment.

Influence on Subsequent Sufi–State Relations in Medieval India

The Suhrawardi order's precedent of selective political cooperation, established by Baha-ud-Din Zakariya, had a lasting impact on the trajectory of Sufi–state relations in medieval India. By demonstrating that engagement with ruling authorities could be harmonized with strict adherence to Sharia, the Suhrawardi model legitimized a pattern of mutual accommodation between Sufi leaders and political elites in later centuries (Trimingham 1971, 165–166).

In the post-Balban period, several Sufi orders adopted varying degrees of this cooperative approach. The Firdausiyya and later branches of the Qadiri order, for example, maintained ties with local rulers to secure patronage for their khanqahs and to influence governance in line with Islamic ethical norms (Eaton 2003, 145–147). Even some Chishti leaders in the fourteenth century, such as Nizam al-Din Auliya's successors, engaged in more pragmatic interactions with the court despite earlier ideals of aloofness (Ernst 1997, 63).

Zakariya's legacy was particularly influential in frontier regions, where Sufi leaders often served as mediators, administrators of charitable endowments, and arbiters of disputes under the Sultanate and later Mughal regimes. This integration of Sufi authority into political frameworks helped to stabilize newly incorporated territories and reinforced the rulers' legitimacy among Muslim and non-Muslim subjects alike (Jackson 1999, 210–212).

Thus, the Suhrawardi political theology and practice shaped a durable model of Sufi–state synergy, balancing the autonomy of spiritual institutions with active participation in political processes. This model became a reference point for later Sufi leaders who navigated the complex interplay of religion, governance, and community leadership in the evolving political landscape of South Asia.

Conclusion

Summary of Findings

This study has shown that Baha-ud-Din Zakariya's Suhrawardi order in Multan represented a distinct model of Sufi–state interaction in the Delhi Sultanate era. Unlike the Chishti order's preference for political aloofness, the Suhrawardi approach under Zakariya embraced selective cooperation with rulers such as Iltutmish and Balban. Through patronage arrangements, land grants, mediation in frontier disputes, and advisory roles, Zakariya integrated his khanqah into the political fabric of the Sultanate while maintaining a strong commitment to Sharia. This dual role—spiritual leadership combined with political engagement—helped secure frontier stability, reinforced the Sultanate's legitimacy, and expanded the influence of the Suhrawardi order beyond purely religious domains.

Broader Implications for Understanding Sufi Political Engagement

The Suhrawardi experience challenges the common perception of Sufis as uniformly apolitical in medieval South Asia. It illustrates that Sufi political theology could accommodate cooperation with ruling authorities when such engagement served religious, social, and political objectives. The Zakariya model provided a blueprint for subsequent Sufi–state relations, especially in politically sensitive regions, and highlights the role of Sufis as active agents in governance, mediation, and the consolidation of Muslim rule. Understanding this model broadens our conception of Sufism's role in state formation, political legitimacy, and the socio-religious integration of diverse communities.

Suggestions for Future Studies

Future research could extend this analysis by examining other Suhrawardi figures and their relations with regional sultanates or early Mughal rulers, allowing for a comparative perspective across time and geography. Archival work on waqf documents and Persian correspondence could reveal further details of khanqah–court financial and administrative links. Additionally, exploring the reception of Suhrawardi political theology among non-Muslim communities in frontier areas could offer insights into the order's role in interfaith relations and local governance.

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