

The Kadiria Zawiya: Architecture and Islamic Sufi Paradigm

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Abstract : Zawiya is a mausoleum where saints called 'waly' are buried and where ritual practices of Sufi Islamic movement take place. These funerary monuments have constituted since the medieval period a fundamental component of rural and urban Islamic landscape, especially that of Tunisia. The hypothesis is that these monuments reflect in their architecture the Sufi underlying thought. The paper's target is to verify the validity of this hypothesis and possibly show the incarnation mode of Islamic Sufi paradigm in the zawiya's architecture. This study considers the main Zawiya of one of the most important religious brotherhoods in Tunisia, which is Kadiria. A morphological analysis has been conducted and crossed later to a spiritual hermeneutic test. The result of this confrontation was significant: the paradigmatic element of the zawiya, materialized by the esoteric / exoteric dome 'kubba', returns in its geometry and structure to one of the Sufism key concepts: the unity of the creative spirit in the diversity and plurality of evanescent bodies. Thus, the creative act finds its reflection not only in the spirit of the perfect human microcosm (the waly microcosm), but also within the building dedicated to him.

Keywords : architecture, Islam, Sufism, waly, zawiya

Conference Title : ICSRD 2020 : International Conference on Scientific Research and Development

Conference Location : Chicago, United States

Conference Dates : December 12-13, 2020