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The Mystic Pen - Dr. William Chittick Remembers: Indo-Muslim Scholar Annemarie Schimmel

by Katherine Schimmel Baki

Everyone has turned his face toward some direction, but the saints have turned in the direction without directions... (Rumi, Mathnavi v 350, Translation by Dr. William Chittick)

Existence is all dust, its luminosity coming from that moon: turn not your back toward the moon, follow not the dust! (Rumi, Divan v. 12236, Translation by Dr. William Chittick)



In a hard-driving rain, Cambridge's streets and shops take on a glossy shine, the murky runoff creating fast-moving rivulets that flow swiftly into already over-filled gutters. On the sidewalk high above the curb, people of all ages, sizes, and nationalities cram under low-hanging awnings, newspapers folded above their heads, trying to escape the sudden downpour. I dart into what is one of my favorite Harvard Square bookstores, relieved to be able to shake off the cool dampness in a warm, dry place full of every kind of book.

If you're not careful, you could get lost in a place such as this. It is not the size of which I speak, nor any inherent fault in the floor plan, which is laid out in logical fashion. I refer only to the fact that when it comes to large quantities of neatly organized books, an intended one-hour stay could easily turn into a full day of reading. This particular place has a wonderfully complete section on almost every topic you could hope to explore on the Middle East, or any other subject you might be interested in.

As I walk amid aisles cast in golden streams of light, Edward Said's classic book, *Orientalism*, jumps out at me, its signature-blue, arabesque cover prompting me to remember the author's insightful observations on how mislaid Western perceptions of the East have created, over the course of many years, a universe of misunderstanding and intolerance.

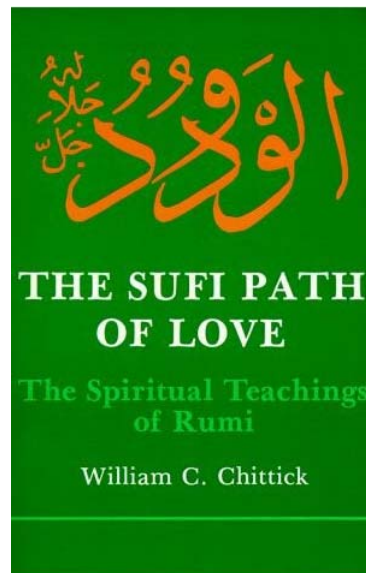
Noam Chomsky's *The Fateful Triangle* catches my eye too, but since both works fall into the "read that already" category, I feel the need to keep scanning the shelves as though seeking to find refuge in some unknown treasure.

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It isn't long until I notice a medium-sized book with an intriguing "Sayyid" green cover and realize I have found the gem I've been searching for all along. The title of the book - *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*, and the author's name - William Chittick, appear crisply across the cover. The English title, however, is a secondary detail because I'm now reading from right to left, carefully scanning the gold calligraphic Arabic text scrawled across the book's cover at an upward-facing angle.

The first word, *Al-Wadud*, pronounced al-wadood, may be best described as a multitude of meanings compressed into one. No single word or string of words in the English language can accurately capture its full scope. But for simplicity's sake, Al-Wadud, means the "All-Loving" and is one of ninety-nine holy names ascribed to God in the Qur'an.

Al-Wadud bears significance in Sufi literature too, because it is the goal of the true Sufi to fully comprehend and witness the all-encompassing, indescribable love of God in all His many manifestations. For the Sufi knows that His love is a love which wraps itself around each and every part of the universe, stretching far beyond what the human being can ever hope to imagine or comprehend, right down to the smallest electron whose fervent spinning has been likened to the very dance of the Whirling Dervishes themselves.

In Islam, Allah is a kind and loving God who yearns to be discovered and reveal himself to humankind. God sets out to create the world so that His desire of wanting to be known may be fulfilled. This concept is expressed beautifully in the well-known sacred Hadith Kudsi, "*Kuntu kanzan makhfiyyan fa ahhabtu an u`rafa fakhalaktu al-khalqa fa bi`arafuni*" - (I was a hidden treasure and loved to be known so I created the world that I might be known.)" and is a central theme found throughout Sufi literature.

This concept, God creating the world so that He might be known, is unique to Islam and offers a different perspective than the one put forth in Genesis (Gen.1:26) in which God creates man in his *own* image, or by further elaboration in St. John's Gospel where creation is mediated through God's word: "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...*" (John 1:1,14), this having more neo-platonic influences.

In the Qur'an, "*He [Allah] shaped him [man] and blew into him from His spirit.*" (Sura 32:9). Humankind in Islam springs to existence by divine command: "*Am I not your Lord?*" and unborn humankind answers emphatically, "*Yes, we witness it.*" (Sura 7:171)

Many years later, 13th Century French Theologian Alain de Lille (who tried most passionately to disprove the legitimacy of both Islam and Judaism in his classic tome on Catholicism), nonetheless captured in poetic form what had by then evolved throughout Europe into a type of medieval Christian "mystical thought," when he penned in Latin:

*Omnis mundi creatura
quasi liber, et picture
nobis est, et speculum.
Nostrae vitae, nostrae mortis,
Nostrae status, nostrae sortis.
Fidele signaculum*

The created beings
of the whole world are
as it were, a book and
a picture and a mirror for us,
a faithful little sign of our life and death,
of our state and fate.

But for Rumi, there were spiritual lessons to be found in every living thing and in every circumstance. He often drew from nature or from common experiences that most people could easily relate to. Using rich, beautiful, often humorous imagery coupled with an extraordinary grasp on meter, rhyme, and subject, he pulls the reader in, always toward greater understanding and with a hunger for more. This is perhaps why his popularity has only increased over the centuries and why the very best scholars of the day never tire of revisiting his work.

He had an extensive knowledge and deep understanding of both the Qur'an and of the recorded sayings of the Prophet (*Hadith*), continuously referring to this verse or that by seamlessly weaving a relevant phrase or expression into his own work. Often, a well-known verse would show up in a slightly different form. He was

particularly fond of highlighting the infinite, all-encompassing nature of God, and shows his cleverness when he plays with the words expressed in Sura 18:109:

*If the seven seas became all ink,
There would be no hope of an end (to God's words),
And if gardens and forests became all pens,
This word would never become less;
All this ink and pen would disappear
But this word without number would remain*
(Rumi, M II 3544, Translation, Annemarie Schimmel)

And so it is from within this context (now fifteen years past), when I first thirsted for the God of Islam, which Rumi describes so well, that I open William Chittick's book, and fully enter the spiritual world of Rumi, embarking on what will become a deep love of Sufi literature: *He has stirred up a world like dust: hidden in the dust, He is like the wind* (Diwan 28600) ... *The world is dust, and within the dust the sweeper and broom are hidden* (Diwan13164). *Day and night, the sea keeps on churning the foam. You behold the foam but not the sea how strange!* (Masnawi III 1271)

In the years that followed, I read and re-read *The Sufi Path of Love*. I underlined passages and fervently scribbled notes in the margins next to the others. I was enchanted by the deftness with which Chittick combines his vast scholarly knowledge of Persian and Sufism, treating the reader to a methodical unrolling of Rumi's spiritual teachings in a thought-provoking, illuminating way. Word by word, layer by layer, like the delicate petals of a rose which slowly and invisibly fall away when given enough sun, wind, rain, and time, the reader is able to grasp subtle aspects of an otherwise hidden and highly elusive spiritual realm.

Although I had never met Dr. Chittick, I was well aware of his considerable scholarly contributions in the field of Sufi thought, literature, and Islamic philosophy. I was also aware that he did not give many interviews, and so I was all too heartened and grateful to learn that he had agreed to do this interview and speak about his dear friend and colleague, Annemarie Schimmel.



Dr. William Chittick

WRR : First off I'd like to thank you for taking time out from your very busy schedule to talk about yourself and Annemarie. You spent a number of years in Iran, first earning a Ph.D in Persian Literature at Tehran University in 1974 and then later you taught Comparative Religion in the Humanities department at Tehran's Aryamehr Technical University, leaving just before the revolution in 1979. What was it like teaching and studying in pre-revolutionary Iran?

Dr. William Chittick: I went to Iran in 1966, right after graduating from the College of Wooster in Ohio, with the intention of studying Sufism and Islamic philosophy. I enrolled in the Ph.D program in Persian language and literature for foreign students at Tehran University. There were about twenty first-year students in the three-year program, mostly from India and Pakistan. I had studied Persian for two semesters before enrolling, and by the time I finished the course work three years later I was often passing as an Iranian.

It took me another three years to finish my dissertation, and two more to see it through the process of publication. It was a critical edition and study of a long prose work by the great Persian poet Abdur-Rahman Jami dealing with the teachings of Ibn Arabi and full of quotations from Rumi. By this time I was teaching comparative religion at Aryamehr Technical University in Tehran, an institution modeled on MIT, and drawing from my own research in Sufi theory to depict the worldviews of Hinduism, Buddhism, and the Chinese and Abrahamic traditions. At the same time I was attending lectures at the newly founded Academy of Philosophy, directed by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, with professors like Toshihiko Izutsu and

Henry Corbin, as well as carrying out research in the writings of Ibn Arabi's followers.

I have nothing but good memories from the twelve years I spent in Iran. Iranians were—and are—exceedingly warm and generous, especially when they meet someone who is interested in their culture. More than once I met people who were astounded that an American student had come to Iran to study Persian literature and Islamic thought, when all their young relatives were eager to go to the US to study medicine and engineering.

In my early years in Tehran, the traffic was still reasonable, and construction had not gotten out of hand; the city was full of tree-lined boulevards, especially in the vicinity of Tehran University, and it was a very pleasant place in which to live. I had rented a room in a house, and the walk to the university took ten minutes. The courses were relaxed and gave us plenty of time for outside activities.

All in all it was an idyllic few years in graduate school—especially when I compare my own experience with what I see in young people these days, under great pressure to succeed in a highly competitive environment. I learned an enormous amount in my twelve years in Iran, much of it by osmosis, and I still draw on that experience in all my teaching and writing. I cannot imagine how any graduate student today could get the same sort of training without spending ten years abroad—but where are such opportunities now?

WRR: You are originally from Connecticut. At what point in either your childhood or your early adult life did you know that you were destined to spend the rest of your life pursuing a career in Persian literature, religion, and Sufism?

Dr. William Chittick: The direction I was going never became completely clear to me until several years into my stay in Iran. Looking back, I can see that I followed a clear and logical trajectory, but at the time, it was

simply one thing leading to another. I had no real sense of purpose in going to college—, simply that it was the thing to do. I took a variety of courses, but nothing caught my imagination. I first realized that “religion” might have something of significance to say to us moderns during a year spent at the International Christian University in Tokyo, which I attended because I had the opportunity to go and because Tokyo sounded like a more interesting place than Ohio. While there I got my first exposure to a really foreign language, and I was fascinated by courses on Buddhist art, with field trips to Kyoto and Nara.

Back at college in Ohio, I was seriously bored by the concerns of my professors and peers and jumped at the opportunity to spend another year abroad, at the American University of Beirut. By now I was a history major, so I took courses on the history of Islamic societies. Through those I became aware of Sufism, and I spent a great deal of time writing a paper on the topic for my home college.

These studies gradually alerted me to the fact that maybe I was right to have had this rather inchoate sense that modern society was—to use one of Annemarie's favorite metaphors—a “*morgh-e besmel*,” that is, a chicken that had just had its head cut off. I had been able to find no sense of real direction or purpose in my family, friends, and acquaintances, much less in society as a whole. My exposure to Sufi teachings provided me with a viewpoint from which to gain some distance from conventional views of reality.

I chose to go to Iran after graduation because of contacts made in Beirut that assured me that I could pursue studies in Sufism and Islamic philosophy. This was a personal, even existential, decision, not a career choice. Only much later did I realize that I could have my cake and eat it too. Becoming established as an academic, however, was not exactly easy, especially since I was outside the old boy's network, and this was long before 9/11 made Americans aware of how woefully ignorant they are of the Islamic world.

WRR: How did you first learn of and later come to meet Annemarie?

Dr. William Chittick: Given my exposure to Sufism in my undergraduate days, and my pursuit of a Ph.D in Persian literature, I became aware of Annemarie's work rather early in my studies, but she never came to Iran in those years, so I never had the opportunity to meet her.

I returned to the U.S. in 1979, after leaving Iran rather precipitously and unexpectedly (hindsight is something else). My wife and I stayed with my mother in Connecticut for a couple of years, during which time I finished off two books that I had been working on in Iran. But I spent most of the time reading the works of Rumi. Annemarie's book on him, *The Triumphal Sun*, had appeared in 1978, and that relieved me of tackling many issues that she had already covered. The result was my *Sufi Path of Love*, which I finished writing in 1981.

Just about this time I was finally able to find an academic position as an assistant editor with the Encyclopedia Iranica at Columbia University, so we moved to New York City. I had corresponded with Annemarie, sending her a copy of an article I had written. When I heard that she came regularly to New York to decipher inscriptions at the Met, I invited her to lunch at our humble—really humble—room in a rather ratty apartment in the Columbia neighborhood. She graciously accepted, and that was the beginning of our friendship. From that time on, we met her in various places about once a year until she retired from Harvard, and a couple of times she came to visit.

WRR: What do you think drew her to the works of Rumi and what aspects of either her upbringing or personality made her especially suited to understanding and translating those works?

Dr. William Chittick: I assume that what drew her to Rumi is what draws so many—beauty. Not only the beauty of Rumi's poetry when recited or sung and the beauty of the Mevlevi tradition that he inspired, but also the beauty of his soul, which shines through his works. No one else in the Islamic tradition has combined beauty in practice and character with a thorough theoretical explication of the true nature of beauty. Despite the rigorous discipline Annemarie imposed upon herself—up every morning early at her typewriter, working constantly—or perhaps as an antidote to that rigor, she focused her work on the beautiful manifestations of Islamic culture in poetry, calligraphy, music, and thought. It is no accident that her students and colleagues dedicated a Festschrift – or written memorial - to her, called *God is Beautiful and He Loves Beauty*.

WRR: You have spent a great deal of time translating the works of Rumi as well. How did Rumi capture your scholarly interest and heart?

Dr. William Chittick: My first exposure to Rumi was during the junior year I spent at the American University of Beirut. When I returned to my college in the US, intent on finishing my BA and going off to Iran, I needed a topic for a year-long independent study project, required of all graduating seniors. I chose Rumi, not least because more of his works had been translated than any other Sufi, and I very much wanted to prepare myself for learning Persian, which was not taught at my college. The senior thesis I wrote as a result of poring over his works was published in Iran in 1973, and has just been republished in this country, embellished with calligraphy and miniatures (*The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi: Illustrated Edition*).

WRR: The writings of the great Pakistani spiritual leader Mohammad Iqbal also had an influence on her scholarly life and led her to undertake translating various texts from Urdu into German, Turkish, and even English. What are some of the challenges a translator of Eastern languages faces when trying to take linguistically complicated texts in Urdu, for instance, and not only translate the work or poem into another language but also place it within a context that a western reader would understand and appreciate?

Dr. William Chittick: It is a lot more difficult to render someone like Rumi adequately than someone like Iqbal, who had thoroughly imbibed Western philosophy and German romanticism. I cannot speak for Urdu, but I do have experience with Arabic and Persian. The most significant stumbling block for translators and their readers is the radically different outlooks on reality that separate pre-modern worlds from our own culture. To use Rumi's terms, language provides us with forms (*sūrat*) that point at “meanings” (*ma' nā*). When we hear him say this, we think it is unremarkable. It simply means that words have meanings that we can look up in the dictionary. But for Rumi, and for pre-modern worldviews generally, “meanings” are the realities that lie behind appearances (whether the appearances be words, or objects, or animals, or humans, or thoughts, or imaginings). Ultimately, as Rumi remarks, quoting his teacher Shams-e Tabrizi, “Meaning is God” (M I 3338), and God is the only true Being, the only “reality” worthy of the name. Take, for example, this line:

*Pass beyond form, escape from names!
Flee titles and names toward meaning!* (M IV 1285)

We moderns understand this to mean that we should not get caught up with superficialities, but there is far more to what Rumi is saying. We live in a worldview that refuses to acknowledge the reality of “meaning” as he understands it. To the extent we give credit to pre-modern cosmologies and their talk of angels and such,

or to various forms of God-talk, we think that this has nothing to do with “reality” and everything to do with personal beliefs and predilections. I won’t object to your beliefs, and you should be nice enough not to object to mine.

This sort of approach would be anathema to Rumi and pre-modern thought in general, because it ignores the way things actually are—that is, the fact that we live in a realm of appearances, which are in effect illusions, obscuring our vision of the way things are. Our human responsibility, the very reason for our existence, is that we are called upon to pass beyond appearance and enter into the realm of Reality. Moreover, we will be called to account for how we deal with the illusory appearances by the very nature of Reality itself (or by “karma” if you prefer). For Rumi, the science of Reality is precisely that, a science—real knowledge, more real in fact than anything that passes for “scientific fact” in our day and age.

What about “love?” you may respond. Surely Rumi called us to love everyone and to accept everyone. Yes and no. The fact is that the only true love is God’s love, for, as the Koran says in a verse that Rumi likes to quote, “He loves them, and they love Him” (5:54). This is to say that God does indeed love human beings—at least some human beings—and human beings are able to love Him in return.

But, as Rumi insists, it also means that human love, to the extent that it is truly love, can only be God’s love reflected in the human soul. And God does not love ugliness and stupidity. “*God is beautiful, and He loves beauty,*” said the Prophet. We live in a world where stupidity—that is, taking appearances at face value and not seeing that we are called to something infinitely higher—rules over our perceptions, much more so than in Rumi’s time, and, as he repeatedly tells us, we need to pass beyond those appearances to find the face of God that is present in all things.

*Know that the outward form passes away,
but the world of meaning remains forever. . . .
You’ve seen the form, but you’re heedless of the meaning.
If you’re intelligent, pick out the pearl from the shell.* (M II 1020, 22)

How does one go about picking out the pearl? Basically—again, a constant theme in Rumi—by following the prophets and saints, those who have loved God before us and who have achieved oneness with their Beloved.

Love, for Rumi, is not a wishy-washy sentiment that sees all things as equally wonderful. Not at all. Things are wonderful only if we can see them in God and as coming from God, and that is the most difficult task with which human beings are faced, because it demands giving up self-centeredness and self-satisfaction, and it requires throwing oneself wholeheartedly into the path of “following” (as Shams-e Tabrizi calls it), that is, doing what God wants us to do, as indicated by His chosen messengers.

Love, after all, is fire, as Rumi never tires of reminding us. And fire burns. At the beginning especially, that burning really hurts, because it consumes everything that provides us with our precious illusions and personal identity. Though Rumi refuses to define love—it is, after all, rooted in the Unknowable Essence of God Himself—he does provide helpful descriptions.

*Love is that flame which, when it blazes up,
burns away everything except the Everlasting Beloved.* (M V 588)

To come back to the question, real translation, “carrying over,” needs to provide forms (words) in a second language that point to the same meanings that are pointed to by the forms of the first language. But that presupposes that the two languages share the same realm of meanings. This is precisely the problem—we do not share the same realm. In modern times, we have debased and degraded meanings, made them subjective, delivered them over to the realm of the illusory, the imaginative, the individual. Without a great deal of preparation, we will not be able to appreciate the fact that Rumi is speaking of the world of permanent realities, of divine meanings that never change, of things as they are in themselves and as they are known always and forever by the Infinite Consciousness that gave birth to the cosmos and everything within it.

Annemarie worked very hard in her many books to provide the cultural context for the poets whom she translated. Invariably, the popular translators have ignored that context and presented Rumi as if he were simply one of our free-thinking, open-minded contemporaries who has seen beyond the hypocrisies of modern life and who can steer us in the direction of being loving and tolerant human beings. But, what a human being is—what a human being is in fact and in reality, that is, in relation to the Supreme Beloved—this gets little if any attention, even though Rumi devotes much of his poetry to explicating our cosmic and divine situation. Without sufficient familiarity with the realm of real meanings, however, a realm that transcends time and space, we will fail to notice what he is talking about.

WRR: It seems to me that the “essence of meaning” could be all too easily lost when jumping from language to language. Over time, small mistakes in translations can become big mistakes when other scholars rely too heavily on information that may not be entirely accurate. Is there a current way to guard against this, a filtering method if you will, or perhaps a central body of linguists that check translations for accuracy?

Dr. William Chittick: Absolutely, it is precisely “the essence of meaning” that is lost. But this is not only a problem in translation, it is also a problem generally in scholarship. In the case of Rumi, it is not only a problem in the modern West, but also in the Persianate world (Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent), where Rumi is still a living presence, despite the attempts of scholars to reduce him to a cultural phenomenon or a national hero.

Modern-day scholarly approaches to Rumi—and here Annemarie was largely an exception—spend far too much time analyzing his language, his rhetoric, his social and political context, his debts to previous figures and his influence on later figures, and everything else one can possibly uncover about him—except what he thought the point of it all was.

Most scholars take for granted that the dominant worldview of our times deals with the real world, and that Rumi was a “medieval” and therefore did not really understand the way things work. Of course, they will tell us, he had interesting insights into psychology—where we are no longer dealing with “reality”—and this helps explain his appeal. Rumi scholarship is generally interesting for other scholars, but offers little help for those who have a sense that Rumi was in fact a saint and a spiritual teacher who has something important to say to us in the modern world.

The problems in translation go far deeper than linguistics, as I suggested earlier. There is a profound gulf between our perception of the world and that of the “medievales.” Any translation of Rumi will be inadequate, but in order to remedy the faults, it is not sufficient to pay more attention to language and the mistakes of earlier translators.

The stumbling block is not the language but the difficulty of stepping out of the dominant prejudices and presuppositions of our age. How is the translator going to avoid the omnipresent scientism, relativism, and ideology and put himself or herself into another worldview? In order to do that—if it can be done—one needs to devote a great deal of time and study, and few imagine first, that there is a problem, and second, that it is worth all the trouble. Certainly, there are no academic rewards to be reaped.

In any case, we all imagine, don't we moderns stand at the pinnacle of objectivity, science, and progress, and don't we have every right to look back and judge all those benighted cultures, poets, and prophets, who were deprived of the wisdom of science and the artifacts of technology?

If we asked Rumi how we are going to solve the problem of interpreting and translating his works, he would tell us that the problem lies with ourselves, not least because we refuse to face up to our cosmic responsibilities. The only way for us to grasp the true meaning of life, the universe, and ourselves—for these indeed are the issues that Rumi presents us with—is to tackle the problem of meaning head on. Our means to engage in the quest is love, which demands erasing everything in ourselves that is antithetical to the Everlasting Beloved. We need to get rid of self-centeredness, pride, and willfulness. We need to keep our own individual destinies constantly in mind - the fact that we will be called to account for what we do, how we think, and who we end up being. Scholarship and linguistics will never provide the answers, nor, for that matter, will beautiful poetry. As Rumi puts it in one of many similar passages,

Interpret yourself, not the reports!

Speak ill of your own brain, not the rose garden! (M I 3744)

WWR: Do you ever wonder, like I do, what books and topics lie unwritten and unstudied because of Annemarie's death?

Dr. William Chittick: My reaction to her life is rather, wonder of wonders! How gifted she was, how blessed she was, how much she has helped so many seekers on the path to love and beauty! How incredible that she was able to stay so focused for so many years and produce so much fine scholarship!

WRR: As you know, Annemarie had a wonderful sense of humor. Can you share with us a particularly comical moment that you've shared with her?

Dr. William Chittick: Annemarie was a great storyteller, and she would often keep a party laughing well into the night - especially if she decided to recite some of the limericks she used to write about friends and colleagues. For some reason, what sticks in my mind at the moment is her account of how she used to meet an old and impoverished traditional scholar at conferences in New Delhi. He often invited her to dinner at his home, and she finally accepted.

The home was more like what we would call a shack, and he prepared the very basic food himself, since his wife had long since passed away. As the two of them were sitting there eating, a mouse suddenly ran up the table leg and presented itself. Annemarie kept her cool (she was not the skittish type). Without batting an eyelash or making any remark, her host handed the mouse a morsel, and it went running off, only to return several more times during the course of the dinner.

WRR: As it turns out, you happened to be writing your book, *Me & Rumi: The Autobiography of Shams-i Tabrizi*, when you first learned of the sad news of Annemarie's passing. The foreword to the book, which you dedicated to her is so moving:

"During my last conversation with her, on Christmas Day 2002, we spoke a good deal about Shams, since she had just read through the manuscript of this book. Professor Schimmel was a great devotee of Mawlana, and her outstanding study of his life and work is known to everyone with a serious interest in Rumi. The reference in the title of her book, The Triumphal Sun, is of course to Shams, the literal meaning of whose name is "sun". The triumph of this sun became clear in the person of Rumi, and its reverberations have sounded down through the centuries. Professor Schimmel's life is the most obvious among its recent manifestations."

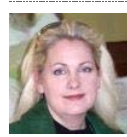
WRR: Your relationship must have been very close and her death must have come as a deep shock.

Dr. William Chittick: Yes, it was a shock. Although she had gone through some health problems, she was actively writing. In fact, we heard that, when she was completely incapacitated in what was to be her deathbed, she nonetheless called one of her friends and proceeded to dictate the rest of the chapter that she was writing.

WRR: Annemarie felt very strongly about the biased treatment of Islam in Western scholarly circles and tried very hard to illuminate the underlying "kernel" of truth to all who were interested. If you had the power to change one aspect of the Western perception of Islam what would it be?

Dr. William Chittick: The misperceptions run deep and have a long, long history. Much would change if people could come to understand that Islam is part of us in the West, that we all belong to the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition. How many people in the West are shocked when it sinks in that "Allah" is simply the Arabic word for God, and that Muslims worship exactly the same God as Jews and Christians! Indeed, anyone who uses the word Allah without explanation increases this all too common misunderstanding and play into the hands of fundamentalists and exclusivists on both sides.

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Baki

KATHERINE SCHIMMEL BAKI, DIRECTOR OF GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS

Katherine Schimmel Baki is co-founder of [haut>art](#), an art consulting company whose mission is to acquaint the public with the work of new artists and to create visually compelling spaces for its clients. Katherine has a longstanding interest in the perceptual dynamics of visual and aural phenomena. She holds a BA degree in Professional Music from Berklee College of Music and a graduate degree (ALM) in the field of Middle Eastern Studies from Harvard University. She has spent a considerable amount of time in the Middle East conducting original research on the Adhan, the Islamic oral call to prayer. Her field work in Cairo resulted in a dissertation entitled, *Hayya 'ala al-Salat: The Socio-Religious Impact of the Adhan on the Muslim Community of Cairo*, (1994). In 2005-2006, she was part of the Quark Park team of Princeton, New Jersey, whose goal was to

generate greater public interest in science and art through the creation of an interactive 18,000 square foot science park in the heart of town. Katherine is currently working on a number of research projects within the fields of ethnomusicology and social anthropology.

KATHERINE SCHIMMEL BAKI IN THIS EDITION:

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