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Citation for Sufism

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Sufism

This entry comprises three articles:

Şūfī Thought and Practice

Şūfī Orders

Şūfī Shrine Culture

The first provides an overview of the traditional themes, practices, literatures, and institutions of Sufism; the second surveys the development and spread of Şūfī orders throughout the Muslim world; and the third treats the spiritual, social, and political significance of Şūfī shrines. See also Sufism and Politics.

Şūfī Thought and Practice

In a broad sense, Sufism can be described as the interiorization and intensification of Islamic faith and practice. The Arabic term *şūfī*, however, has been used in a wide variety of meanings over the centuries, both by proponents and opponents, and this is reflected in the primary and

secondary sources, which offer diverse interpretations of what Sufism entails. Western observers have not helped to clarify the matter by referring to Sufism as “Islamic mysticism” or sometimes “Islamic esotericism.” Such terms are vague and often imply a negative value judgment, as well as encouraging people to consider as non-*Ṣūfī* anything that does not fit into preconceived notions.

The original sense of *ṣūfī* seems to have been “one who wears wool.” By the eighth century the word was sometimes applied to Muslims whose ascetic inclinations led them to wear coarse and uncomfortable woolen garments. Gradually it came to designate a group who differentiated themselves from others by emphasis on certain specific teachings and practices of the Qur’ān and the *sunnah*. By the ninth century the gerund form *taṣawwuf*, literally “being a *Ṣūfī*” or “Sufism,” was adopted by representatives of this group as their appropriate designation.

In general, the *Ṣūfīs* have looked upon themselves as Muslims who take seriously God’s call to perceive his presence both in the world and in the self. They tend to stress inwardness over outwardness, contemplation over action, spiritual development over legalism, and cultivation of the soul over social interaction. On the theological level, *Ṣūfīs* speak of God’s mercy, gentleness, and beauty far more than they discuss the wrath, severity, and majesty that play important roles in both *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and *kalām* (dogmatic theology). Sufism has been associated not only with specific institutions and individuals but also with an enormously rich literature, especially poetry. [See *Fiqh*; *Theology*.]

Given the difficulty of providing an exact definition of Sufism, it is not easy to discern which Muslims have been *Ṣūfīs* and which have not. Being a *Ṣūfī* certainly has nothing to do with the Sunnī/Shī’ī split nor with the schools of jurisprudence. It has no special connection with geography, though it has played a greater role in some locations than in others. There is no necessary correlation with family, and it is common to find individuals who profess a *Ṣūfī* affiliation despite the hostility of family members, or people who have been born into a family of *Ṣūfīs* yet consider it an unacceptable form of Islam. Both men and (less commonly) women become *Ṣūfīs*, and even children participate in *Ṣūfī* ritual activities, though they are seldom accepted as fullfledged members before puberty. Sufism has nothing to do with social class, although some *Ṣūfī* organizations may be more or less class specific. Sufism is closely associated with popular religion, but it has also produced the most elite expressions of Islamic teachings. It is often seen as opposed to the state-supported jurists, yet jurists have always been counted among its devotees, and Sufism has frequently been supported by the state along with jurisprudence. The characteristic *Ṣūfī* institutions—the “orders” (*ṭarīqahs*)—do not begin to play a major role in Islamic history until about the twelfth century, but even after that time being a *Ṣūfī* has not necessarily entailed membership in an order.

Working Description.

Specialists in the study of Sufism have reached no consensus as to what they are studying. Those who take seriously the self-understanding of the *Ṣūfī* authorities usually picture Sufism as

an essential component of Islam. Those who are hostile toward Sufism, or hostile toward Islam but sympathetic toward Sufism, or skeptical of any self-understanding by the objects of their study, typically describe Sufism as a movement that was added to Islam after the prophetic period. The diverse theories of Sufism's nature and origins proposed by modern and premodern scholars cannot be summarized here. The best one can do is to suggest that most of Sufism's own theoreticians have understood it to be the living spirit of the Islamic tradition. One of the greatest Ṣūfī teachers, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), gives a nutshell description of Sufism's role within Islam in the very title of his magnum opus, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (Giving Life to the Sciences of the Religion).

Understood as Islam's life-giving core, Sufism is coextensive with Islam. Wherever there have been Muslims, there have been Ṣūfīs. If there was no phenomenon called “Sufism” at the time of the Prophet, neither was there anything called “*fiqh*” or “*kalām*” in the later senses of these terms. All these are names that came to be applied to various dimensions of Islam after the tradition became diversified and elaborated. If one wants to call the Ṣūfī dimension “mysticism,” then one needs an exceedingly broad description of the role that mysticism plays in religion, such as that provided by Louis Dupré, who writes that religions “retain their vitality only as long as their members continue to believe in a transcendent reality with which they can in some way communicate by direct experience” (“Mysticism,” *Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by Mircea Eliade, New York, 1987, vol. 10, p. 247).

In historical terms, it is helpful to think of Sufism on two levels. On the first level—which is the primary focus of the Ṣūfī authorities themselves—Sufism has no history, because it is the invisible, animating life of the Muslim community. On the second level, which concerns both Muslim authors and modern historians, Sufism's presence is made known through certain observable characteristics of people and society or certain specific institutional forms. Ṣūfī authors who looked at Sufism on the second level wanted to describe how the great Muslims achieved the goal of human life, nearness to God. Hence their typical genre was hagiography, which aims at bringing out the extraordinary human qualities of those who achieve divine nearness. In contrast, Muslim opponents of Sufism have been anxious to show that Sufism is a distortion of Islam, and they have happily seized on any opportunity to associate Sufism with unbelief and moral laxity (see Carl Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*, Albany, 1985, pp. 117ff.).

The attacks on Sufism frequent in Islamic history have many causes. Not least of these has been the social and political influence of Ṣūfī teachers, which often threatened the power and privileges of jurists and even rulers. Although the great Ṣūfī authorities set down many guidelines for keeping Sufism squarely at the heart of the Islamic tradition, popular religious movements that aimed at intensifying religious experience and had little concern for Islamic norms were also associated with Sufism. Whether or not the members of these movements considered themselves Ṣūfīs, opponents of Sufism were happy to claim that their excesses represented Sufism's true nature. The Ṣūfī authorities themselves frequently criticized false Ṣūfīs, and the dangers connected with loss of contact with the ahistorical core of Sufism could only increase when much of Sufism became institutionalized through the Ṣūfī orders (see, for example, the criticisms by the sixteenth century Ṣūfī 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī in Michael Winter, *Society*

and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt: Studies in the Writings of 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī, New Brunswick, N.J., 1982, pp. 102ff.). If Sufism is essentially invisible and ahistorical, the problem faced by those who study specific historical phenomena is how to judge the degree to which these deserve the name Sufism. The Ṣūfī authorities typically answer that the criteria of authentic Sufism are found in correct activity and correct understanding, and these pertain to the very definition of Islam.

In looking for a Qur'ānic name for the phenomenon that later generations came to call Sufism, some authors settled on the term *iḥṣān*, “doing what is beautiful,” a divine and human quality about which the Qur'ān says a good deal, mentioning in particular that God loves those who possess it. In the famous *ḥadīth* of Gabriel, the Prophet describes *iḥṣān* as the innermost dimension of Islam, after *islām* (“submission” or correct activity) and *īmān* (“faith” or correct understanding). *Iḥṣān* is a deepened understanding and experience that, in the words of this *ḥadīth*, allows one “to worship God as if you see him.” This means that Ṣūfīs strive always to be aware of God's presence in both the world and themselves and to act appropriately. Historically, *islām* became manifest through the *sharī'ah* and jurisprudence, whereas *īmān* became institutionalized through *kalām* and other forms of doctrinal teachings. In the same way, *iḥṣān* revealed its presence mainly through Ṣūfī teachings and practices (see W. C. Chittick, *Faith and Practice of Islam: Three Thirteenth Century Sufi Texts*, Albany, 1992, parts 1 and 4). [See *Īmān*.]

By codifying the *sharī'ah* jurisprudence delineates the exact manner in which people should submit their activities to God. *Kalām* defines the contents of Islamic faith while providing a rational defense for the Qur'ān and the *ḥadīth*. For its part, Sufism focuses on giving both submission and faith their full due. Hence it functions on two levels, theory (corresponding to *īmān*) and practice (corresponding to *islām*). On the theoretical level, Sufism explains the rationale for both faith and submission. Its explanations of faith differ from those of *kalām* both in perspective and in focus, but they are no less carefully rooted in the sources of the tradition. On the practical level, Sufism explains the means whereby Muslims can strengthen their understanding and observance of Islam with a view toward finding God's presence in themselves and the world. It intensifies Islamic ritual life through careful attention to the details of the *sunnah* and by focusing on the remembrance of God's name (*dhikr*), which is commanded by the Qur'ān and the *ḥadīth* and is taken by the Ṣūfī authorities as the *raison d'être* of all Islamic ritual. *Dhikr* typically takes the form of the methodical repetition of certain names of God or Qur'ānic formulas, such as the first *Shahādah*. In communal gatherings, Ṣūfīs usually perform *dhikr* aloud, often with musical accompaniment. In some Ṣūfī groups these communal sessions became the basic ritual, with corresponding neglect of various aspects of the *sunnah*. At this point Ṣūfī practice became suspect not only in the eyes of the jurists, but also in the eyes of most Ṣūfī authorities.

Like other branches of Islamic learning, Sufism is passed down from master (typically called a *shaykh*) to disciple. The master's oral teachings give life to the articles of faith, and without his transmission, *dhikr* is considered invalid if not dangerous. As with *ḥadīth*, transmission is traced back through a chain of authorities (called *silsilah*) to the Prophet. The typical initiation rite is modeled on the handclasp known as *bay'at al-riḍwān* (the oath-taking of God's good pleasure) that the Prophet exacted from his companions at Ḥudaybiyah, referred to in the Qur'ān, surah

48.10 and 48.18. The rite is understood to transmit an invisible spiritual force or blessing (*barakah*) that makes possible the transformation of the disciple's soul. The master's fundamental concern—as in other forms of Islamic learning—is to shape the character (*khuluq*) of the disciple so that it conforms to the prophetic model. [See Dhikr; Shaykh; Barakah.]

If molding the character of students and disciples was a universal concern of Islamic teaching, the Ṣūfīs developed a science of human character traits that had no parallels in jurisprudence or theology, though the philosophers knew something similar. Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 1240), Sufism's greatest theoretician, described Sufism as “assuming the character traits of God” (Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, Albany, 1989, p. 283). Since God created human beings in his own image, it is their duty to actualize the divine character traits that are latent in their own souls. This helps explain the great attention that Ṣūfī authorities devote to the “stations” (*maqāmāt*) of spiritual ascent on the path to God and the “states” (*aḥwāl*) or psychological transformations that spiritual travelers undergo in their attempt to pass through the stations.

Ṣūfī theory offered a theological perspective that was far more attractive to the vast majority of Muslims than *kalām*, which was an academic exercise with little practical impact on most people. From the beginning, the *kalām* experts attempted to understand Qurʾānic teachings in rational terms with the help of methods drawn from Greek thought. In keeping with the inherent tendency of reason to discern and differentiate, *kalām* fastened on all those Qurʾānic verses that assert the transcendence and otherness of God. When faced with verses that assert God's immanence and presence, *kalām* explained them away through forced interpretations (*taʿwīl*). As H. A. R. Gibb has pointed out, “The more developed theological systems were largely negative and substituted for the vivid personal relation between God and man presented by the Koran an abstract and depersonalized discussion of logical concepts” (*Mohammedanism*, London, 1961, p. 127). Ibn al-ʿArabī made a similar point when he said that if Muslims had been left only with theological proofs, none of them would ever have loved God (Chittick, *Sufi Path*, p. 180). [See the biography of Ibn al-ʿArabī.]

The Qurʾān speaks of God with a wide variety of terminology that can conveniently be summarized as God's “most beautiful names” (*al-asmāʾ al-ḥusnā*). For the most part, *kalām* stresses those names that assert God's severity, grandeur, distance, and aloofness. Although many early expressions of Sufism went along with the dominant attitudes in *kalām*, another strand of Ṣūfī thinking gradually gained strength and became predominant by the eleventh or twelfth century. This perspective focused on divine names that speak of nearness, sameness, similarity, concern, compassion, and love. The Ṣūfī teachers emphasized the personal dimensions of the divine-human relationship, agreeing with the *kalām* authorities that God was distant, but holding that his simultaneous nearness was the more important consideration. The grand theological theme of the Ṣūfī authors is epitomized in the *ḥadīth qudsī* in which God says, “My mercy takes precedence over my wrath,” which is to say that God's nearness is more real than his distance.

If *kalām* and jurisprudence depended on reason to establish categories and distinctions, the Ṣūfī authorities depended on another faculty of the soul to bridge gaps and make connections. Many

of them referred to this faculty as imagination (*khayāl*) and considered it the power of the soul that can perceive the presence of God in all things. They read literally the Qur'ānic verse, "Wherever you turn, there is the face of God" (2:115), and they find a reference to imagination's power to perceive this face in the Prophet's definition of *iḥṣān*: "It is to worship God as if you see him." Through methodical concentration on the face of God as revealed in the Qur'ān, the Ṣūfīs gradually remove the "as if" so that they are left with "unveiling" (*kashf*), the generic term for suprarational vision of God's presence in the world and the soul. Ibn al-'Arabī asserts that unveiling is a mode of knowledge superior to reason, but he also insists that reason provides the indispensable checks and balances without which it is impossible to differentiate among divine, angelic, psychic, and satanic inrushes of imaginal knowledge.

Spectrums of Ṣūfī Theory and Practice.

One way to classify the great variety of phenomena that have been called Sufism in Islamic history is to look at the types of responses they have made to basic Islamic theological teachings. *Tawḥīd*, the fundamental assertion of Islam, declares that God is one, but it also implies that the world is many. The connection between God's oneness and the world's manyness can be found in God's eternal knowledge of all things, on the basis of which he creates an infinitely diverse universe and reveals scriptures that differentiate between true and false, right and wrong, absolute and relative, and all other qualities that have a bearing on human salvation. Oneness and manyness represent two poles not only of reality but also of thought. Imaginal thinking tends to see the oneness and identity of things, while rational thinking focuses on manyness, diversity, and difference. A creative tension has existed between these two basic ways of looking at God and the world throughout Islamic history. By and large, the *kalām* authorities and jurists have emphasized the rational perception of God's distance, while the Ṣūfī authorities have countered with the imaginal perception of God's nearness. On occasion the balance between these two perspectives has been broken by a stern and exclusivist legalism on one hand or an excessively emotional religiosity on the other. In the first case, the understanding of the inner domains of Islamic experience is lost, and nothing is left but legal nit-picking and theological bickering. In the second case, the necessity for the divine guidance provided by the *sharī'ah* is forgotten, and the resulting sectarian movements break off from Islam's mainstream. In modern times these two extremes are represented by certain forms of fundamentalism on one side and deracinated Sufism on the other (for an interesting case study, see Mark Woodward, *Islam in Java*, Tucson, 1989, especially pp. 234ff.).

Within the theory and practice of Sufism itself, a parallel differentiation of perspectives can be found. Many expressions of Sufism vigorously assert the reality of God's omnipresent oneness and the possibility of union with him, while others emphasize the duties of servanthood that arise out of discerning among the many things and discriminating between Creator and creature, absolute and relative, or right and wrong. In order to describe the psychological accompaniments of these two emphases, the Ṣūfīs offer various sets of terms, such as "intoxication" (*sukr*) and "sobriety" (*ṣaḥw*) or "annihilation" (*fanā'*) and "subsistence" (*baqā'*). Intoxication follows upon being overcome by the presence of God: the Ṣūfī sees God in all things and loses the ability to

discriminate among creatures. Intoxication is associated with intimacy (*uns*), the sense of God's loving nearness, and this in turn is associated with the divine names that assert that God is close and caring. Sobriety is connected with awe (*haybah*), the sense that God is majestic, mighty, wrathful, and distant, far beyond the petty concerns of human beings. God's distance and aloofness allow for a clear view of the difference between servant and Lord, but his nearness blinds the discerning powers of reason. Perfect vision of the nature of things necessitates a balance between reason and imaginal unveiling.

The contrast between sober and drunk, or the vision of oneness and the vision of manyness, reverberates throughout Ṣūfī writing and is reflected in the hagiographical accounts of the Ṣūfī masters. Those who experience intimacy are boldly confident of God's mercy, while those who experience awe remain wary of God's wrath. By and large, drunken Ṣūfīs tend to deemphasize the *sharī'ah* and declare union with God openly, whereas sober Ṣūfīs observe the courtesy (*adab*) that relationships with the Lord demand. The sober fault the drunk for disregarding the *sunnah*, and the drunk fault the sober for forgetting the overriding reality of God's mercy and depending on reason instead of God. Those who, in Ibn al-'Arabī's terms, "see with both eyes" keep reason and unveiling in perfect balance while acknowledging the rights of both sober and drunk.

Expressions of sobriety and intoxication often have rhetorical purposes. An author who disregards rational norms has not necessarily been overcome by the divine wine—if he had, he would hardly have put pen to paper. So also, sober expressions of Sufism do not mean that the authors know nothing of intoxication; typically, sobriety is described as a station that follows intoxication, since the sobriety that precedes intoxication is in fact the intoxication of forgetfulness. Ṣūfīs always wrote for the purpose of edification, and different teachers attempted to inculcate psychological attitudes reflecting the needs they perceived in their listeners.

Drunken expressions of Sufism predominate in Ṣūfī poetry, which is ideally suited to describe the imaginal realm of unveiled knowledge, the vision of union and oneness. In contrast, reason is locked into theological abstractions that keep the servant distant from the Lord; it is perfectly adapted to the expression of system, order, and rules. If Ṣūfī poetry constantly reminds us of God's presence, Ṣūfī prose tends toward a rational discourse that is ideal for manuals of doctrine and practice—works that always keep one eye on the opinions of the jurists and the *kalām* experts. Poetic licence allowed the Ṣūfī poets to say things that could not be expressed openly in prose. In the best examples, such as Ibn al-Fārid in Arabic, 'Aṭṭār, Rūmī, and Ḥāfiẓ in Persian, and Yunus Emre in Turkish, the poetry gives rise to a marvellous joy and intoxication in the listener and conveys the experience of God's presence in creation. Since this experience flies in the face of juridical and theological discourse, it is sometimes expressed in ways that shock the pious (for a good study of the role of poetry and music in contemporary Sufism, see Earl H. Waugh, *The Munshidīn of Egypt: Their World and Their Song*, Columbia, S.C., 1989). [See *Devotional Music*; *Devotional Poetry*.]

For many Western observers, whether scholars or would-be practitioners, "real" Sufism has been identified with the drunken manifestations that denigrate the external and practical concerns of

“orthodox” Islam. It is seldom noted that many of those who express themselves in the daring poetry of union also employ the respectful prose of separation and servanthood. Drunken Sufism rarely demonstrates interest in juridical issues or theological debates, whereas sober Sufism offers methodical discussions of these topics that can quickly prove tiring to any but those trained in the Islamic sciences. The poets address the highest concerns of the soul and employ the most delicious and enticing imagery; the theoreticians discuss details of practice, behavior, moral development, Qur’ānic exegesis, and the nature of God and the world. Drunken Sufism has always been popular among Muslims of all classes and persuasions, and even the most literal-minded jurists are likely to enjoy the poetry while condemning the ideas. Sober Sufism has attracted the more educated Ṣūfī practitioners who were willing to devote long hours to studying texts that were no easier than works on jurisprudence, *kalām*, or philosophy.

For Sufism to remain whole, it needs to keep a balance between sobriety and drunkenness, reason and unveiling—that is, between concern for the *sharī‘ah* and Islamic doctrine on one hand and for the experience of God’s presence on the other. If sobriety is lost, so also is rationality, and along with it the strictures of *islām* and *īmān*; if drunkenness is lost, so also is religious experience, along with love, compassion, and *iḥṣān*. Within Sufism’s diverse forms, a wide range of perspectives is observable, depending on whether the stress falls on oneness or manyness, love or knowledge, intoxication or sobriety. Too much stress on either side means that Sufism becomes distorted and ceases to be itself, but where the line must be drawn is impossible to say with any precision.

The classic example of the contrast between drunken and sober Sufism is found in the pictures drawn of Ḥallāj (d. 922) and Junayd (d. 910). The first became Sufism’s great martyr because of his open avowal of the mysteries of divine union and his disregard for the niceties of shariatic propriety. The second, known as the “master of all the Ṣūfīs” (*shaykh al-ṭā’ifah*), kept coolly sober despite achieving the highest degree of union with God. Another example can be found in the contrast between the two high points of the whole Ṣūfī tradition, Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 1240) and Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273). The former wrote voluminously in Arabic prose and addressed every theoretical and practical issue that arises within the context of Islamic thought and practice. His works are enormously erudite and exceedingly difficult, and only the most learned of Muslims who were already trained in jurisprudence, *kalām*, and other Islamic sciences could hope to read and understand them. In contrast, Rūmī wrote more than seventy thousand verses of intoxicating poetry in a language that every Persian-speaking Muslim could understand. He sings constantly of the trials of separation from the Beloved and the joys of union with him. But the contrast between the two authors should not suggest that Rūmī was irrational or unlearned, or that Ibn al-‘Arabī was not a lover of God and a poet; it is rather a case of rhetorical means and emphasis. Among Western scholars, Henry Corbin argues forcefully that Rūmī and Ibn al-‘Arabī belong to the same group of *fidèles d’amour* (*Creative Imagination in the Ṣūfism of Ibn ‘Arabī*, Princeton, 1969, pp. 70–71).

In the classical Ṣūfī texts there are two basic and complementary ways of describing Sufism. If the drunken side of Sufism is stressed, it is contrasted with jurisprudence and *kalām*; if sobriety is stressed, it is viewed as the perfection (*iḥṣān*) of right practice (*islām*) and right faith (*īmān*). The

great theoreticians of Sufism, who speak from the viewpoint of sobriety, strive to establish a balance among all dimensions of Islamic thought and practice, with Sufism as the animating spirit of the whole. These thinkers include Sarrāj (d. 988), Kalabādhī (d. 990), Sulamī (d. 1021), Qushayrī (d. 1072), Hujwīrī (d. 1072), Ghazālī, Shihāb al-Dīn 'Umar Suhrawardī (d. 1234), Ibn al-'Arabī, Najm al-Dīn Rāzī (d. 1256), and 'Izz al-Dīn Kāshānī (d. 1334/35). In contrast, the actual everyday practice of Sufism, especially in its popular dimensions, tends to appear antagonistic toward legalistic Islam, even though this is by no means always the case (see, for example, Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo*, Princeton, 1992, especially chapter 3, which makes clear that Ṣūfīs and jurists have sometimes been indistinguishable).

Sufism in the Modern World.

In the modern period many Muslims have sought a revival of authentically Islamic teachings and practices, not least in order to fend off Western hegemony. Some have responded largely in political terms, while others have tried to revive Islam's inner life. Among most of the politically minded, Sufism became the scapegoat through which Islam's "backwardness" could be explained. In this view, Sufism is the religion of the common people and embodies superstition and un-Islamic elements adopted from local cultures; in order for Islam to reclaim its birthright, which includes modern science and technology, Sufism must be eradicated. Until recently most Western observers have considered the modernist reformers to be "Islam's hope to enter the modern age." Nowadays, the dissolution of Western cultural identity and an awareness of the ideological roots of ideas such as progress and development have left the modernists looking naive and sterile. In the meantime, various Ṣūfī teachers have been busy reviving the Islamic heritage by focusing on what they consider the root cause of every disorder—forgetfulness of God. Especially interesting here is the case of the famous Algerian freedom fighter 'Abd al-Qādir Jazā'irī (d. 1883), who devoted his exile in Syria to reviving the heritage of Ibn al-'Arabī (see Emir Abd el-Kader, *Ecrits spirituels*, translated by M. Chodkiewicz, Paris, 1982). [See the biography of 'Abd al-Qādir.] Today grassroots Islam is far more likely to be inspired by Ṣūfī teachers than by modernist intellectuals, who are cut off from the masses because of their Western-style academic training. The presence of demagogues who have no qualms about manipulating religious sentiment for their own ends complicates the picture immensely.

Parallel to the resurgence of Sufism in the Islamic world has been the spread of Ṣūfī teachings to the West. In America, drunken Sufism was introduced in the early part of this century by the Chistī *shaykh* and musician Inayat Khan (*The Complete Works*, Tucson, 1988); his teachings have been continued by his son, Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan, a frequent lecturer on the New Age circuit. In Europe, sober Sufism gained a wide audience among intellectuals through the writings of the French metaphysician René Guénon, who died in Cairo in 1951 (*The Symbolism of the Cross*, London, 1958). More recently hundreds of volumes have been published in Western languages that are addressed to Ṣūfī seekers and reflect the range of perspectives found in the original texts, from sobriety to intoxication. Many of these works are written by authentic representatives of Ṣūfī *silsilahs*, but many more are written by people who have adopted Sufism

to justify teachings of questionable origin, or who have left the safeguards of right practice and right thought—*islām* and *īmān*—and hence have no access to the *iḥṣān* that is built upon the two.

Contemporary representatives of sober Sufism emphasize knowledge, discernment, and differentiation and usually stress the importance of the *sharī'ah*. Best known in this group is Frithjof Schuon (*Islam and the Perennial Philosophy*, London, 1976), who makes no explicit claims in his books to Ṣūfī affiliations but, as reviewers have often remarked, writes with an air of spiritual authority. He is said to be a member of the Shādhiḷīyah-'Alawīyah order of North Africa (G. C. Anawati and L. Gardet, *Mystique musulmane*, Paris, 1968, p. 72). He takes an extreme position on the importance of discernment and offers a rigorous criticism of the roots of modern antireligion. The main thrust of his writings seems to be to offer a theory of world religions based on the idea of a universal esoterism, the Islamic form of which is Sufism. He frequently asserts the necessity for esoterists of all religions to observe the exoteric teachings of their traditions, this being the *sharī'ah* in the case of Islam. Titus Burckhardt (*Fez: City of Islam*, Cambridge, England, 1992) represents a similar perspective, but his works are more explicitly grounded in traditional Ṣūfī teachings. Martin Lings (*What is Sufism?*, Berkeley, 1975), who has also published under the name Abū Bakr Sirāj ed-Dīn (*The Book of Certainty*, London, 1952), presents a picture of Sufism that is intellectually rigorous but firmly grounded in explicit Islamic teachings. The noted Iranian scholar Seyyed Hossein Nasr (*Sufi Essays*, London, 1972) also stresses intellectual discernment more than love, and he repeatedly insists that there is no Sufism without the *sharī'ah*. The books of the Turkish Cerrahi leader Muzaffer Ozak (*The Unveiling of Love*, New York, 1982) present *sharī'ah*-oriented Sufism that is much more focused on love than on intellectual discernment. The Naqshbandī master Nazim al-Qubrusi (*Mercy Ocean's Divine Sources*, London, 1983) offers a warm presentation of desirable human qualities, again rooted in a perspective that stresses love and often discusses the shariatic basis of Sufism. The Iranian Ni'matullāhī leader Javād Nūrbakhsh (*Sufi Symbolism*, vols. 1–5, London, 1984–1991) has published several anthologies of classic Ṣūfī texts; his own perspective falls on the side of intoxication, with emphasis on oneness of being and union with God. He pays little attention to the *sharī'ah*, but he discusses the importance of Ṣūfī communal activities such as sessions of *dhikr*. Even more to the side of love and intoxication are the works of Guru Bawa Muhaiyaddeen (*Golden Words of A Sufi Sheikh*, Philadelphia, 1982), who presents a synthesis of Sufism and Hindu teachings that is recognizably Islamic only in its terminology.

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Ṣūfī Orders

Ṣūfī orders represent one of the most important forms of personal piety and social organization in the Islamic world. In most areas, an order is called a *ṭarīqah* (pl., *ṭuruq*), which is the Arabic word for “path” or “way.” The term *ṭarīqah* is used for both the social organization and the special devotional exercises that are the basis of the order's ritual and structure. As a result, the “Ṣūfī orders” or *ṭarīqahs* include a broad spectrum of activities in Muslim history and society.

Mystical explanations of Islam emerged early in Muslim history, and there were pious mystics who developed their personal spiritual paths involving devotional practices, recitations, and literature of piety. These mystics, or Ṣūfīs, sometimes came into conflict with authorities in the Islamic community and provided an alternative to the more legalistic orientation of many of the ‘*ulamā*’. However, Ṣūfīs gradually became important figures in the religious life of the general population and began to gather around themselves groups of followers who were identified and bound together by the special mystic path (*ṭarīqah*) of the teacher. By the twelfth century (the fifth century in the Islamic era), these paths began to provide the basis for more permanent fellowships, and Ṣūfī orders emerged as major social organizations in the Islamic community.

The orders have taken a variety of forms throughout the Islamic world. These range from the simple preservation of the *ṭarīqah* as a set of devotional exercises to vast interregional organizations with carefully defined structures. The orders also include the short-lived organizations that developed around particular individuals and more long-lasting structures with institutional coherence. The orders are not restricted to particular classes, although the orders in which the educated urban elite participated had different perspectives from the orders that reflected a more broadly based popular piety, and specific practices and approaches varied from region to region.

In all Ṣūfī orders there were central prescribed rituals which involved regular group meetings for recitations of prayers, poems, and selections from the Qur’ān. These meetings were usually described as acts of “remembering God” or *dhikr*. In addition, daily devotional exercises for the followers were also set, as were other activities of special meditation, asceticism, and devotion. Some of the special prayers of early Ṣūfīs became widely used, while the structure and format of