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ИСТОРИОГРАФИЯ И ИСТОЧНИКОВЕДЕНИЕ

КОЛЛЕКЦИИ И АРХИВЫ

На четвертой стороне обложки:

Из китайского альбома акварелей на «рисовой» бумаге (*тунцао*) в собрании СПбФ ИВ РАН (Фонд Китайский Nova 15)

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Historiography of Sufi Studies in the West and in Russia*

> "Mysticism is such a vital element in Islam that without some understanding of its ideas and of the forms which they assume we should seek in vain to penetrate below the surface of Mohammadan religious life. The forms may be fantastic and the ideas difficult to grasp; nevertheless we shall do well to follow them, for in their company East and West often meet and feel themselves akin."
>
> Reynold A. Nicholson, *Studies*, p. VI.

1. Introduction

Libraries have been written on the phenomenon of "Islamic mysticism" or "Sufism" (Arab. *tasawwuf*)[1] in the Muslim world, in non-Muslim Asia,[2] and in the West. The definition of this term and its heuristic validity have been a matter of heated debates among Western experts on Islamic studies.[3] In the meantime, as a contemporary Western scholar has aptly remarked, "people end up taking up these terms to mean whatever they wish".[4] One can of course denounce this conceptual and terminological "free-for-all" as deeply misleading and deplorable (which, in a sense, it is), but one should bear in mind that the same lack of consensus applies to practically every analytical category deployed in the field of Islamic studies, including such critical ones as "Islam",[5] "fundamentalism",[6] "Wahhabism",[7] "[Islamic] modernism/reformism", etc. All these and many other conceptions often mean quite different things to different people and their usage varies considerably depending on the context in which they are deployed. If we insist on having a universally acceptable definition of Sufism, we

* Данная статья представляет собой расширенный и значительно обновленный вариант библиографического очерка А.Д. Кныша, изданного на русском языке четырнадцать лет назад: *Кныш А.Д.* Суфизм // Ислам: Историографические очерки. Под общей ред. С.М. Прозорова. М., 1991. С. 109–207.

[1] For the etymologies of this word see my Islamic Mysticism: A Short History. Leiden, 2000. P. 5–8 and the references cited therein (Книга переведена на русский язык и издана в авторской редакции: *Кныш А.Д.* Мусульманский мистицизм: краткая история // А.Д. Кныш; пер. с англ. М.Г. Романов. СПб , 2004. — 464 с.); cf. *Ernst C.W.* The Shambala Guide to Sufism. Boston, 1997. P. 18–26.

[2] Primarily, Japan, China and, to a lesser extent, South Korea.

[3] See, e. g., *Ernst C.W.* The Shambala Guide. P. IX–XIX; cf. *Sedgwick M.* Sufism: The Essentials. Cairo, 2000. P. 5–8; for a critique of the uses of the notion "Sufism" as an explanatory model see my articles: The *tariqa* on a Landcruiser: The Resurgence of Sufi Movement in Yemen // Middle East Journal, 3 (Summer 2001). P. 399–414; Sufism as an Explanatory Paradigm: The Issue of the Motivations of Sufi Resistance Movements in Western and Russian Scholarship // Die Welt des Islams, 42, 2 (2002). S. 139–173.

[4] *Ernst.* The Shambala Guide. P. XVII.

[5] Ibid. P. XIV–XVII.

[6] Ibid. P. 211–216; interestingly, the author, who at the beginning of his book dismisses the term "Sufism" as an artificial construct of European Orientalism, has no compunctions using the equally problematic and "artificial" notion of "fundamentalist Islam".

[7] See my article: A Clear and Present Danger: 'Wahhabism' as a Rhetorical Foil // Die Welt des Islams, 44, 2 (2004). S. 3–26.

shall have to concede that it is yet to be developed and agreed upon by scholars specializing in Sufi and Islamic studies. Does this imply that we should simply refrain from using the notion of "Sufism", or, for that matter, all of the other analytical categories mentioned above? Interestingly, this is exactly what many Sufi masters of old encouraged their followers to do, citing the ineffability and uniqueness of Sufi experience and its distinctness from one Sufi to another. Yet, paradoxically, these same Sufi teachers have produced hundreds of volumes of tracts, biographies, teaching manuals and collections of poetry, which today constitute the textual foundation of Sufi studies.[8] They have also advanced a plethora of various definitions of Sufism and advocated dramatically different epistemological approaches to the teachings, practices and way of life associated with it.[9]

2. Intellectual Premises and Limitations

In the present article I will try to provide a survey of approaches to the study of Sufism's history in, first and foremost, Western scholarship with special emphasis on the last one hundred years. My omission of modern Islamic scholarship on the subject implies no disrespect for its achievements. Surveying it would require a separate study due to the wealth of studies of Sufism that has been produced in the Middle East and the Muslim world as a whole over the past several decades.[10]

As any survey, my discussion of the vicissitudes of Sufi studies in the West is per force selective, incomplete and guided, in part, by my own academic background and research competence, which therefore require a brief introduction. My approach to Sufism can best be described as historical/historicist and contextual. It focuses on the diversity of manifestations of Sufi piety, thought and institutions and seeks to demonstrate how they were conditioned by the socio-political and geographical contexts in which they evolved. My principal concern is to avoid privileging any given trend or period in Sufi history with a view to using it as a measuring stick in examining the phenomena, doctrines, institutions and personalities that are usually perceived as belonging to Sufism. Geographically, my research interests are focused primarily on the Arab Middle East, North Africa and, to a lesser extent, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Naturally, studies devoted to these geographical areas will receive more attention in my survey. Conceptually, and in this I am not alone,[11] I see Sufism's evolution in time and space as being inextricably intertwined with and continually influenced by the overall development of Islamic devotional practices, theological and literary discourses,

[8] This field of intellectual inquiry, in turn, is extremely diverse. Studies of Sufism range from spirited exercises in theosophical speculations to dry historicism aimed at describing the evolution of Sufi practices, teachings and institutions across the ages. For a typical example of the former, see *Rushbrook W.L.F.* (ed.). Sufi Studies: East and West: A symposium in honor of Idries Shah's services to Sufi studies by twenty-four contributors marking the 700th anniversary of the death of Jalaluddin Rumi (A.D. 1207–1273). N. Y., 1973; for the latter, see my Islamic Mysticism.

[9] See, e. g., *Nicholson R.* A Historical Inquiry Concerning the Origin and Development of Sufism // Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society. 1906. P. 303–348, which provides 78 different definitions of Sufism culled from medieval Sufi manuals and treatises; contrary to Ernst and at the risk of being accused of "Orientalist bias" (The Shambala Guide. P. 23–31), I would argue that "native" Islamic definitions are neither "better" nor "worse" than their Western counterparts, since they, too, try to capture the "essence" of Sufism, while at the same time leaving out its important aspects. Whether a comprehensive and universally acceptable definition of this phenomenon is possible or necessary is a wholly different matter.

[10] Here I refer to the studies produced and published in the Muslim world, which can, some reservations apart, be classified as academic. This definition excludes theological and devotional discussions of Sufism, which can be seen as an extension of the medieval polemical and apologetic literature on Sufism produced by pro- and anti-Sufi scholars from the early Middle Ages on. For a survey of such literature see, e. g., my Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam. Albany, 1999, *passim* and *Sirriyeh E.* Sufis and Anti-Sufis: The Defence, Rethinking and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World. Richmond, Surrey, 1999.

[11] See, e. g., *Ernst.* The Shambala Guide. P. 1–18; cf. *Sedgwick.* Sufism. P. 1–8.

scriptural exegesis, esthetics, political and legal theories as well as religious and social institutions.[12] Sufism, in its turn, has exerted a significant, and oftentimes critical influence on all of the above, especially literature and theology.[13] In my own study of Sufism, I have been careful to avoid grand generalizations about its purported "essence". Such generalizations, unfortunately, are quite common in Western works analyzed in the present chapter. The epistemological approach that seeks to bring out the trans-historical "essence" of Sufism often involves the acceptance by the scholar of a certain strand within the Sufi movement as "authentic" and "representative" and, consequently, using it as the bench-mark in determining the "authenticity" of any given Sufi theory, practice or institution. I find this approach problematic and will try to demonstrate its pitfalls.[14]

In dealing with Sufi literature I try to be sensitive to the normative assumptions and apologetic agendas that permeate the writings of the classics of Sufi literature. These assumptions and agendas often result in carefully sanitized and unproblematic narratives about Sufism's rise and development, which are occasionally accepted by Western scholars at face value.[15] At the same time, I am also keen to avoid falling into the trap—oftentimes tempting—of hypercriticism of these sources.[16] I believe that early Sufi sources, if interpreted critically, can yield a fairly accurate picture of the rise and development of the ascetic and mystical movement in Islam. As for the more recent history of Sufism (from the seventeenth century C.E. on) and its contemporary condition, we have at our disposal such an abundance of written, archival (state registers, *waqf* documentation, censuses, etc.) and oral sources (by both insiders and outsiders, including Western travelers, colonial officials and anthropologists) that it may discourage even the most determined scholar. Analyzing these materials will take decades before a more or less coherent picture of Sufism's later development will begin to emerge. In many respects, the normative literature of Sufism is not different from that generated by any other theological or religio-political party or juridical school in Islam. It represents the tradition's self-image and self-perception, often highly idealized and selective. If we choose, along with some so-called "revisionist" scholars, to dismiss Sufism's "discursive formations" as ideological constructs deliberately designed to mislead us,[17] we have no option but retreat into a sulky agnosticism. However, since the "revisionists" themselves so far have not done this, I see no compelling reason not to continue our efforts to get to the bottom of things, while, at the same time, taking into consideration the quite real concerns raised by the skeptics.

Despite my critique of certain trends in the academic study of Sufism, in the final analysis I take a positive view of Western scholarship on the subject and will argue that, over the past century and a half, Islamic studies have made great strides in identifying the main turning points and chief personalities of Sufism's history as well as in understanding its institutions, practices and teachings. At the same time, I recognize the shortcomings of Western studies of Sufism, in particular, their persistent tendency to juxtapose Sufism with so-called "mainstream" or "orthodox" Islam,[18] the difficulty of determining what historical, religious and

[12] See my Islamic Mysticism. P. 325–326.

[13] For Sufism's profound and long-ranging influence on Islamic literatures, especially Persophone and Turkic ones, see the still unsurpassed works of *Schimmel A.* Mystical Dimensions of Islam. Chapel Hill, 1975; *idem.* As Through a Veil: Mystical Poetry in Islam. N. Y., 1982; *idem.* A Two-Colored Brocade: The Imagery of Persian Poetry. Chapel Hill, 1992; for a much more rare—and therefore noteworthy—study of Arabic mystical poetry see *Homerin E.Th.* From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint: Ibn al-Farid, His Verse, and His Shrine. Columbia, SC, 1994.

[14] See, e. g., *Chittick W.* Faith and Practice in Islam: Three Thirteenth Century Sufi Texts. Albany, NY, 1992, P. 1–21 and my criticism of his thesis in Ibn 'Arabi. P. 274–275.

[15] See, e. g., *Chittick W.* Sufism: A Short Introduction. Oxf., 2000 and my review of this book in Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, 13/2 (2002). P. 231–232.

[16] For an example of this approach to classical Sufi biographies see *Mojaddedi J.* The Biographical tradition in Sufism. Richmond, 2001; cf. my review thereof in *BSOAS*, vol. 65/3 (October 2001). P. 576–578.

[17] See, e. g., *Mojaddedi.* The Biographical Tradition. P. 180–181.

[18] See *Ernst.* The Shambala Guide, *passim* and my Review of Elizabeth Sirriyeh's Sufis and Anti-Sufis // Middle East Journal, 54/2 (Spring 2000). P. 322–324.

social phenomena in Islamdom should be viewed as "Sufi" or "non-Sufi", and, last but not least, the obsessive and oftentimes counterproductive quest for the "foreign roots" of Islamic mysticism. If the present chapter succeeds in providing some tentative and incomplete answers to these and other issues and challenges, I will consider my task accomplished.

3. Western Studies of Sufism in a Historical Perspective: The Main Themes and Challenges

The study of Sufism in the West over the past century and a half is marked by a diligent quest for and accumulation of disparate facts and sources pertaining to the subject. This process usually has gone hand-in-hand with theory-building and conceptualization of the collected data, which have lead to the formation of long-lasting explanatory models and establishment of a number of academic "orthodoxies" that dominated Western perceptions of Sufism for extended periods of time. Obviously, theory building in any given historical epoch is conditioned by its overall intellectual climate with its stereotypes, conventions, prejudices, classificatory models and other kinds of preformed intellectual assumptions. They come to the fore in academic and popular depictions of other societies and cultures, especially those associated with the "exotic" and "mysterious Orient".[19] While modern Western views of the Far East or South Asia were, by and large, dictated by intellectual curiosity and pragmatic considerations (namely, trade and commerce, political control and profit), these geographical areas were usually not perceived as sources of an imminent threat to Western religious beliefs, ethical and moral values and political fortunes.[20] The Muslim world, on the other hand, has had a long history of violent military confrontations with its Christian neighbors on both sides of the Mediterranean. Furthermore, unlike Buddhism and other "Oriental" religions, which rested on intellectual and spiritual premises mostly alien to Westerners, the religious foundations of Islamic societies were derived from the shared Judeo-Christian legacy.[21] Muslim claims to this legacy were not only unwelcome, but outright insulting to many members of the Christian clergy. This factor determined the righteous passion with which Christian scholars sought to counter Muslim "pretensions" to be not simply on a par but also superior to their Abrahamic forerunners.[22] Despite the trappings of academic impartiality, Christian polemical agendas have insidiously penetrated and informed the mindsets of Western academic experts on Islamic religion, culture and societies over the past century and a half.[23] In general, the intellectual trajectory of Sufi studies in the West should be viewed against the background of European intellectual history in the nineteenth-twentieth centuries. A discipline that started as primarily philological, text-centered exercise gradually evolved into a subdivision of "cross-religious" studies that were pursued by curious amateurs (diplomats, travelers, colonial officials), Biblicists, and, more recently, area studies specialists. Since their activities coincided with Europe's colonial expansion in Central Asia, India, the Middle East and North Africa, they could not remain immune to the colonial agendas of their respective nation-states.

Here it is not the place to enter the debate over the role of "Orientalism" in shaping the image of Islam for the Western public at large that was initiated by a US-Arab scholar and literary critic Edward Said in the late 1970s. At the same time, one cannot avoid it altogether in dealing with the history of Western study of Islam, so a brief account of the matter is in

[19] *Said E.* Orientalism. Harmondworth, 1989, *passim*; for a thoughtful discussion of Said's critique and counter-critique see *Clarke J.J.* Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter between Asian and Western Thought. L.–N. Y., 1997. P. 22–28 and literature cited therein.

[20] Ibid. P. 23–24.

[21] Ibid. P. 23.

[22] See, e. g., *Burman T.* Religious Polemic and the Intellectual History of the Mozarabs, 1050–1200. Leiden, 1994, *passim*.

[23] Examples of these biases will be provided in the subsequent narrative.

order. According to Said, from the early nineteenth century on Western academic approaches to Islamic societies were critically shaped by Europe's colonial ventures in the Middle East. Taking his cue from Michel Foucault (1926–1984),[24] Said argued that these approaches were determined by the dependant position of the Muslim world vis-a-vis the European colonial powers. Therefore, in Said's view, the entire body of knowledge and discourse about the Islamic Middle East generated by several generations of European Orientalists was implicated in the imperialist plot to subjugate and control Islamic societies. Hence, the "Orient" (and "Islam") created by Western scholarship was, according to Said, but a series of blatant distortions and misrepresentations that was designed to justify and facilitate Europe's colonial adventures in the Middle East. Pushing his thesis to its logical conclusion, Said presented the fundamental epistemological problem faced by Western students of Islam in the following manner:

> Much as one may be inclined to agree... [that] Islam *has* been fundamentally misrepresented in the West—the real issue is whether indeed there can be a true representation of anything, or whether any and all representations, because they *are* representations, are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambience of the representer.[25]

Thus, in Said's view, any accurate representation of the dependent colonial object by the colonizing subject is simply impossible. Seen from this vantage point, the entire project of Western Orientalism is nothing but a grand epistemological and moral failure.[26] In what follows we shall occasionally revisit Said's critique in dealing with individual Western writers on Sufism.

Finally, as with any other branch of humanistic scholarship apart from the geopolitical realities outlined above (namely, Western colonialism and the West-East power differential) one should also keep in mind the so-called subjective factor, that is, the personality of the investigating subject with his or her personal inclinations (sympathies and antipathies), temperament, social upbringing, religious convictions, etc. The scholar's personal background often colors his or her entire approach to his or her field of academic endeavor—in our case, to Islam and its civilization. However, the role of the subjective factor increases even further when it comes to the mystical tradition of Islam, which pertains to a particularly intangible aspect of human existence. While some scholars have attempted to trivialize the mystical experience behind Sufi teachings and practices by treating it as any other human sensation or cognitive process (as well as a specific mode of communicating this experience to others), its deeply personal and elusive character is usually taken for granted.[27] Hence, the oft-cited idea (in both Western and Muslim literature) that any discussion of Muslim mystical experience by a person who has not been exposed to it is futile, whereas "insider" accounts of it can only be appreciated by the like-minded individuals steeped in the same mystical tradition.[28]

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[24] See, e. g., *Foucault M.* Histoire de la sexualité. P., 1976, vol. 1. P. 50–67; cf. *idem.* The History of Sexuality. N. Y., 1990. P. 385–389; cf. *idem.* The Order of Things: An Anthropology of Human Sciences. N. Y., 1994. P. 378–382.

[25] *Said.* Orientalism. P. 272.

[26] Ibid. P. 328.

[27] See, e. g., *Anawati G., Gardet L.* Mystique musulmane: aspects et tendances, expériences et techniques. 3d ed., P., 1976. P. 14; *Salim M.A.* A Critical Approach to Sufism // University Studies, Karachi, 4, 2 (1967). P. 56; *Schimmel.* Mystical Dimensions. P. 8–12; for a dissenting view see *Katz S.T.* (ed.). Mysticism and Language. Oxf., 1992, *passim*; for an interesting attempt to rationalize mystical experience see *Hodgson M.G.S.* The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization. 3 vols. Chicago, 1974, vol. 2. P. 203–206.

[28] Idris Shah can be cited as the most typical exponent of this thesis; see *Rushbrook W.L.F.* (ed.). Sufi Studies, which is a fitting tribute to his legacy by, for the most part, like-minded scholars; cf. also *Nasr S.H.* Introduction // *Lewisohn L.* (ed.). Classical Persian Sufism: From its origins to Rumi. L.–N. Y., 1993. P. 1–10, and my review of this book in JRAS, 9/3 (November 1999). P. 434–438.

The rich spiritual and intellectual legacy of Sufism may exert such an irresistible attraction upon its initially "unengaged" students that some of them occasionally become totally transformed by it and, as it were, "sucked" into its world of fascination and mystery. Such scholars-turned-Sufis often choose to make the study and dissemination of knowledge about Sufism their personal vocation.[29] On the opposite end of the spectrum are those who reject out of hand the reality and genuineness of mystical experience and declare it to be a deliberate sham on the part of "unscrupulous" Sufi masters seeking to achieve a higher social status and personal material gain by manipulating their credulous followers. This "skeptical" approach has until recently dominated Sufi studies in the former Soviet Union, whose representatives wittingly or unwittingly toed the atheistic "party line".

Apart from these objective and subjective factors, a major challenge facing Western students of Islamic mysticism is the vast geographical spread of Sufism and its institutions from West Africa to China (Xinjiang) and from the Balkans and the Volga region to South Africa. Sufi ideologies, practices and institutions differ considerably from one region to another as they are determined by a myriad of local factors and conditions. Furthermore, even within one and the same region they have changed dramatically over time. It goes without saying that organizational, doctrinal and practical aspects of Sufism in, say, Malaysia are vastly different from those in North Africa and vice-versa. This disparity explains the fact that specialists in regional manifestations of Sufism are willy-nilly confined to the region of their immediate expertise (e. g., India, China, Iran, Central Asia, Syria, Egypt, the Maghrib, Sub-Saharan Africa, etc.) during a certain historical period. Even within one and the same geographical region scholars often focus on a certain locality or a relatively limited geographical sub-area. For instance, we rarely find experts on Sufism in the Maghrib as a whole.[30] It is much more common to find an expert on Sufism in Morocco or, to narrow the geographical focus even further, in Rif (the North-Western region of Morocco which is rich in Sufi-based institutions). The tendency to localize one's study of Sufism is especially salient in anthropological studies that have proliferated over the past three decades. Such studies tend to identify and focus on a rather small geographical locality or one Sufi brotherhood.[31] Finally, some scholars prefer to concentrate on just one eminent Sufi master.[32] Attempts by some scholars to transcend regional manifestations of Sufism and to produce a comprehensive history of Sufi movement across the ages have yielded mixed results, since they have tended to privilege the regional version of Sufism they are most familiar with, while giving short shrift to other geographical areas.[33]

In general, the subject-matter and chronological framework of Sufi studies in the West are extremely diverse. Some of them discuss a sum total of Sufi teachings, practices, personali-

[29] E. g., the members of the so-called "traditional school" that emphasized the "perennial" character of Sufi wisdom and practice. Many of them trace their spiritual pedigree to the great Sufi thinker Ibn [al-]'Arabi; see, *Ernst C.W.* Traditionalism, The Perennial Philosophy, and Islamic Studies // Middle East Studies Association Bulletin, 28, 2 (1994). P. 176–181.

[30] For a notable exception, see *Cornell V.J.* Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Islam. University of Texas Press, 1998, which seeks to examine the evolution of Sufism in the entire Maghrib (as well as al-Andalus) over several centuries.

[31] See, e. g., *Crapanzano V.* The Hamadsha: A Study in Moroccan Ethnopsychiatry. Berkeley, 1973; *O'Brien D.* The Mourides of Senegal: The Political and Economic Organization of an Islamic Brotherhood. Oxf., 1971; *Eickelman D.* Knowledge and Power in Morocco: The Education of a Twentieth-Century Notable. Princeton, 1985; *Ewing K.P.* Arguing Sainthood: Modernity, Psychoanalysis, and Islam. Durham, N.C., 1997, etc.

[32] A typical example is Serge Laugier de Beaureceuil, who dedicated his entire life to the study of the legacy of 'Abdallah al-Ansari (d. 481/1089) — *de Beaureceuil S.L.* Khwadja 'Abdullah Ansari (396–481 H./1006–1089): mystique hanbalite. Beirut, 1965; likewise, Louis Massignon's lifetime work was dedicated the life and legacy of al-Hallaj (d. 309/922) — *Massignon L.* The Passion of Husain b. Mansur al-Hallaj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam. Trans. Herbert Mason. 4 vols. Princeton, 1982; see also *Meier F.* Abu Sa'id-i Abu 'l-Hair: Wirklicheit und Legend. Leiden, 1976 and *idem.* Baha'-i Walad: Grundzüge seines Lebens und seiner Mystik. Leiden, 1989; *O'Fahey R.* Enigmatic Saint: Ahmad b. Idris and the Idrisi Tradition. Evanston, IL, 1990; *Vikør K.* Sufi and Scholar on the Desert Edge: Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Sanusi and His Brotherhood. L., 1995.

[33] For a brief discussion of the major introductory books on Sufism see my Islamic Mysticism. P. 1–3.

ties and institutions in a given historical epoch (e. g., "early Sufism," "Sufism of the classical period," "Sufism in Iran",[34] etc.). Others examine a certain Sufi teaching, practice or concept in historical perspective.[35] Also common are studies of the intellectual universe of a prominent Sufi master or poet.[36] As already mentioned, some studies focus on the history of a given Sufi institution (brotherhood or shrine).[37] Studies of mystical poetry and literature constitute a separate field of Sufi scholarship and are usually undertaken by academics versed in methods of literary criticism and discourse analysis. Numerous investigations of so-called "popular", or "folk Islam", also occasionally fall under the rubric of Sufi studies,[38] although the exact nature of the relationship between, say, a local saint cult and Sufism is occasionally rather difficult to ascertain.[39]

4. Sufi Studies in Historical Perspective

Although Europe's exposure to Sufism occurred already in the Middle Ages, the first serious attempts to address it in academic terms date to the seventeenth century C.E.[40] Western academics of that period devoted themselves to translating and analyzing the literary output of the "Soofees", especially, the works of such great Persian poets as Sa'di, 'Attar, Rumi, Jami and Hafiz.[41] A quite different image of Sufism emerges from Western travelogues and personal memoirs of Western visitors to the Middle East and Central Asia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Produced by Western colonial officials, administrators, litterateurs and merchants they emphasize the exotic aspects of Sufism, as manifested in the "outlandish" behavior and practices of various types of "dervishes", especially in the Ottoman, Safavid and Mogul realms. In the writings of this genre, literary concerns were often intertwined with the author's desire to provide a systematic and accurate account of various Sufi practices, doctrines and communities. A typical example of this "descriptive" literature is the book of an American scholar-cum-diplomat[42] John P. Brown titled *The Dervishes or Oriental*

[34] *Lewisohn L.* (ed.). The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism. L.–N. Y., 1992; *Lewisohn L.* (ed.). Classical Persian Sufism: From Its Origins to Rumi.

[35] E. g., the classical study of the notion of "trust in God" (*tawakkul*) by Benedict Reinert (*Reinert B.* Die Lehre vom tawakkul in der klassischen Sufik. B., 1968); for an illuminating discussion of the role of the Sufi *pir* in Indian Sufism, see *Buehler A.* Sufi Heirs to the Prophet. Columbia, SC, 1998.

[36] *Chittick W.* The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysicis of imagination. Albany, NY, 1989; *idem.* The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-'Arabi's Cosmology. Albany, NY, 1992; *Keshavarz F.* Reading Mystical Lyric: The Case of Jalal al-Din Rumi. Columbia, SC, 1998; *Morris J.W.* The Wisdom of the Throne: An Introduction to the philosophy of Mulla Sadra. Princeton, 1981; *Chodkiewicz M.* The Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn 'Arabi. Trans. Liadain Sherrard. Cambridge, 1993; *Ernst C.W.* Ruzbihan Baqli: Mysticism and the Rhetoric of Sainthood in Persian Sufism. Richmond, 1996, etc.

[37] See, e. g., *Ernst C.W.* Eternal Garden: Mysticism, History, and Politics at a South Asian Sufi Center. Albany, NY, 1992; *Lifchez R.* Dervish Lodge: Architecture, Art, and Sufism in Ottoman Turkey. Berkeley, 1992, etc.

[38] For a recent example see *Chambert-Loir H., Gilliot C.* (eds.). Le culte des saints dans le monde musulman. P., 1995.

[39] For a perceptive critique of the widespread identification of Sufism with "popular religion" and the cult of local saints in particular, see *Morris J.W.* Situating Islamic 'Mysticism': Between Written Traditions and popular spirituality // *Herrera R.A.* (ed.). Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics, and Topologies. N. Y., 1993, *passim.*

[40] For the still unsurpassed account of the history of Sufi studies in modern Europe see *Arberry A.J.* An Introduction to the History of Sufism. L., 1942.

[41] E. g., *Malcolm J.* The History of Persia from the Most Early Period to the Present Time. 2 vols. L., 1815; *de Sacy S.* (ed.). Pend-naméh, le livre des conceils de Férid-Eddin Attar. P., 1819; *Tholuck F.* Blütensammlung aus der morgenländischen Mystik. B., 1825; *Rückert F.* Sieben Bücher morgenländischer Sagen und Geschichten. Stuttgart, 1837; *de Tassy G.* La poésie philosophique et religieuse chez les persans. P., 1860; *Hammer-Purgstall J.* Das arabische hohe Lied der Liebe. Vienne, 1854, etc.

[42] While Brown was not a trained "Orientalist" by profession, I am reluctant to call him "amateur", since, in his epoch, "Orientalism" was just beginning to take shape as an independent academic discipline and, apart from a handful of scholars associated with divinity schools at some European universities, the majority of writers on Sufism were *stricto sensu* "amateurs".

Spiritualism (first published in 1868).[43] This richly illustrated book combined vivid descriptions of various Sufi orders of Istanbul (including their dress, ritual practices, legends and beliefs) with excerpts from contemporary Western studies of Sufism, such as Edward Lane's groundbreaking *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (first published in 1836), d'Ohsson's *Tableau général de l'Empire Ottoman* (first published in 1788), and Ubicini's *Letters on Turkey* (1856; its English translation from the original French also appeared in 1856). Most of these observers of Sufism were preoccupied with the search for the origins of mystical piety and thought in Islam. Despite their obvious fascination with the beauty of Sufi literature and the exemplary piety of individual Muslim mystics, they were reluctant to consider mysticism to be intrinsic to the Islamic religion. Wittingly or not, they assumed that Islam was inferior to Christianity and therefore incapable of producing the vaulted spirituality and sophisticated theology they observed in Sufi texts. Hence their attempts to find "foreign roots" of Sufism in various extraneous religious and philosophical systems, such as, Neoplatonism, Hermeticism, Christian monasticism as well as Indian philosophies and religions (especially, Hindu "pantheism" and Buddhist philosophy). In most cases, Western scholars were unable to produce any conclusive evidence of Sufism's "foreign" origins due to the absence of sources pertaining to its rise and early evolution. Therefore, their theories were little more than educated guesses. Furthermore, practically all these scholars exhibited a gamut of typical anti-Islamic prejudices of their age. A case in point is the French scholar Joseph Garcin de Tassy (1794–1878), whose fascination with Persian language and literature did not prevent him from paying tribute to the anti-Islamic shibboleths of his time. Thus, Islam for him was but "a grossly distorted [version] of Christianity",[44] whose followers should therefore be treated as "Christian heretics" along the lines of the gnostic sect of the Adamites, who believed that the human soul had originated in the Godhead before being plunged into the sinful human body.[45] In accordance with his overall premise, Garcin de Tassy held Sufi teachings to be a Muslim variant of "pantheism", which, however, should be distinguished from the "errors" of its Hindu counterpart.[46] However, despite their differences, both, in the final analysis, have lead their followers to "materialism, denial of human freedom [of action], lack of differentiation between [good and evil] actions and license to engage in all manner of earthly pleasures".[47]

Such views were shared by many European Orientalists, who were trained as philologists and Biblical studies scholars. Their philological predilections are evident in their overriding preoccupation with Sufi poetry, which they tended to treat in isolation from Islam.[48] Some even considered it to be a deliberate challenge to the mainstream Islamic dogma, a manifestation of free-thinking or even downright "atheism" in Islam. The philological concerns of Western students of Sufism found an eloquent expression in their interest in the dictionaries of Sufi terms, which, in their judgment, were supposed to provide the indispensable key to the understanding of masterpieces of Sufi literature. The distinguished German Orientalist Gustav Flügel (1802–1870) accomplished the earliest Latin translations of the dictionaries of Sufi technical terms by Abu 'Ali al-Jurjani (d. 816/1413) and Muhyi 'l-Din Ibn [al-]'Arabi (d. 638/1240). Around the same time, Aloys Sprenger (1813–1893) a German scholar employed by the British colonial administration of India, published an edition of the Sufi dictionary by a famous commentator on Ibn [al-]'Arabi, 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Qashani (d. in 730/1329 or 735/1334). These works, together with the monumental collection of Sufi biographies by 'Abd al-Rahman Jami (d. 898/1492), which was edited in 1859 by the prolific

[43] *Brown J.P.* The Darvishes or Oriental Spiritualism. Ed. with an Introduction and Notes by H.A. Rose. L., 1968.

[44] "Une grande aberration chrétienne" (*de Tassy.* La poésie philosophique. P. 1).

[45] Ibid. P. 11.

[46] Ibid. P. 2.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid. P. 6.

British Orientalist William Nassau Lees (1825–1889), served as a solid foundation for the further advancement of, and interest in, Sufi studies in Europe.

All major "histories of Islam" that appeared in Europe between the 1850s and 1890s contain at least cursory discussions of Islamic mysticism. Their authors tended to draw a sharp distinction between Sufism and mainstream Islam (both Sunni and Shi'i) and to treat the former as a foreign importation from one or the other religious and philosophical system, especially Hinduism, Neo-Platonism, and the Christian mystical and monastic tradition.[49] In his influential *Geschichte der herrschenden Ideen des Islam* Alfred von Kremer (1828–1889) addressed Sufism from the vantage point of Islam's "dominant ideas". Although the main thrust of his work was formulated in opposition to the earlier attempts by Western Orientalists to trace the specificity of Islamic civilization to the linguistic and racial characteristics of Muslim peoples, von Kremer, perhaps unwittingly, reproduced similar racial stereotypes in his discussion of Sufism. As many of his peers, he consistently derived ascetic and mystical tendencies in Islam from outside sources. Thus, he traced the "ascetic elements" of Islamic religion back to Christian monasticism, while Islam's "contemplative" element—so prominent in later Sufism—was, in his view, a result of the "Buddhist-Hindu" influence mediated by Persian culture.[50] This latter influence eventually suppressed the "Christian-ascetic" element of Islam[51] and rendered it "contemplative" rather than "ascetic". The "contemplative" Sufism of al-Suhrawardi al-Maqtul (d. 587/1191) and Ibn [al-]'Arabi, according to von Kremer, marked the beginning of the "decline" and "degeneration" not only of Islamic mysticism but also of Islam as a whole.[52] These and similar ideas informed Western academic perceptions of Sufism in the second half of the nineteenth century and survived into the twentieth century.[53]

With European colonial expansion in the Middle East and South Asia in the early nineteenth century Western studies of Islamic mysticism acquired pragmatic overtones. The pragmatic approach was dictated by the exigencies of colonial policy in Algeria for the French, in Indonesia for the Dutch, and in India for the British. It was pursued primarily by French, Dutch and British colonial administrators, who were concerned with Sufism's potential to rally the Muslim masses against colonial rule. Their intellectual endeavor, which a Western student of Sufism has recently dubbed as "police report scholarship",[54] existed alongside academic Orientalism, whose practitioners were preoccupied with the recovery and translation of the intellectual and literary legacy of Islam's "golden age" (the ninth-eleventh centuries C.E.). They were, however, patently uninterested in the current conditions of Islamic societies, which they viewed as having long been in the state of "decay" and "stagnation". Practitioners of "applied Orientalism", on the other hand, usually had a rather vague idea of the past glory of Islamic civilization and were concerned primarily with its "here and now".[55] Given the realities of colonial rule, it is only natural that many of them came from military background: the earliest studies of Maghribi Sufi brotherhoods were

[49] See, e. g., *Dozy R.* Essay sur l'histoire de l'Islamisme. Trans. Victor Chauvin. Leiden–Paris, 1979. P. 221, 239, 317, and so on.

[50] *von Kremer A.* Geschichte der herrschenden Ideen des Islams. Lpz., 1868. P. XI, 65, 82–83, 130–131, etc.; for a critique of von Kremer's thesis see *Nicholson R.* The Idea of Personality in Sufism. Cambridge, 1923, P. 26–27.

[51] Von Kremer associates its triumph with the execution of al-Hallaj in 309/922, ibid. P. 76–77.

[52] Ibid. P. 80–100.

[53] A typical example of this academic attitude is the work of the British Orientalist Edward Palmer (1840–1882), whose study of the famous Persian mystic 'Aziz Nasafi (thirteenth century CE) was influenced by the racial theory of the age. For him, Sufism was "an Aryan reaction" of the Persians to the "nomocentric" "Semitic genius" of the Arabs (*Palmer E.* Oriental Mysticism: A Treatise on Sufistic and Unitarian Theosophy of the Persians. L., 1969. P. XI).

[54] *Vikør.* Sufi and Scholar. P. 11.

[55] *Burke E.* The Sociology of Islam: The French Tradition // Islamic Studies: A Tradition and Its Problems. Ed. by Malcolm Kerr. Malibu, CA, 1980. P. 74–75.

accomplished by French army officers: Edouard de Neveu,[56] Charles Brosselard,[57] Henri Duveyrier,[58] and a few others. The pragmatic trend in French Orientalist scholarship reached its peak in the encyclopedic *Marabouths et khouan* (1884) of the French infantry captain Louis Rinn. In the introduction to his massive study, Rinn promised his readers a "comprehensive" and "impartial" discussion of the history and customs of North African Sufi brotherhoods.[59] However, in examining the occasionally antagonistic relations between members of the holy lineages (*marabouths*)[60] and leaders of various Sufi brotherhoods he advised his colonial superiors to exploit these tensions in order consolidate French control over the country.[61] In discussing the origins of Sufism, Rinn repeated the already familiar notion that it goes back to "ancient Indian philosophy".[62] At the same time, he was inclined to derive some key practices in North African Sufism from the Berber language[63] in line with the French colonial theory that emphasized the inherent incompatibility between the "indigenous" Berber beliefs and the religion of their Arab colonizers. In other words, the Bebers embraced Sufism—essentially a non-Islamic phenomenon—in response to the imposition of "orthodox" Islam on their communities. At the same time, Rinn's statistical data regarding the numerical strength and geographical location of various Maghribi brotherhoods[64] is highly valuable.[65]

The works of the Frenchmen Alfred Le Chatelier, Octave Depont and Xavier Coppolani exhibit similar basic assumptions. The former examined the history and composition of eighteen Sufi brotherhoods active in the Hijaz (primarily in and around Mecca).[66] In discussing the political and military potential of the powerful Sanusiyya brotherhood of Libya Le Chatelier justified his intellectual endeavor by the fact that the object of his study was a major obstacle to the French *mission civilisatrice* in the African continent.[67] Le Chatelier's descriptions of his sojourn in Mecca bear a striking resemblance to the intelligence report of an undercover agent from an enemy camp.

The French obsession with the "plotting" of Maghribi Sufi brotherhoods finds a dramatic expression in the colossal *œuvre* by the French colonial officials Depont and Coppolani, which summarized the results of several decades of scholarship on Sufism in France's North African colonies. Commissioned by the French governor general of Algeria, it was intended to provide a panoramic picture of Sufism from its inception up until the end of the nineteenth century. In dealing with the problem of Sufism's origins, the authors sought to trace it back to Neo-Platonic ideas.[68] At the same time, they identified other influences that left their imprint on Sufi doctrines and practices, including Berber "animism", the ancient Mithra cult, Manichaeism and Christian monasticism.[69] While acknowledging the role of these and other "external" influences, the authors nevertheless were, however, careful to point out that mystical experiences are shared by all human beings regardless of their association with any

[56] *de Neveu É.* Les khouan, orders religieux chez les musulmanes de l'Algérie. P., 1846.

[57] *Brosselard Ch.* Les Khouan: de la constitution des ordres religieux musulmans en Algérie. P., 1859.

[58] *Duveyrier H.* La confrérie musulmane de Sidi Mohammed ben 'Ali es-Senousi et son domaine géographique en l'année 1300 de l'hégire. P., 1883.

[59] *Rinn L.* Marabouths et Khouan. Étude sur l'Islam en Algérie. P., 1884. P. VII.

[60] That is, lineages that traced their pedigrees to the "House of the Prophet" (*ahl al-bayt*).

[61] *Rinn.* Marabouths. P. 19.

[62] Ibid. P. 25.

[63] See, e. g., ibid. P. 25 (*sufi*) and P. 64 (*wird*).

[64] Ibid. P. 526–549.

[65] In all, Rinn mentioned 88 various brotherhoods, of which twenty are analyzed in considerable detail.

[66] *Le Chatelier A.* Les confréries musulmanes de Hédjaz. P., 1887.

[67] For an illuminating analysis of the French obsession with the "plotting" and "intrigues" of the Sanusiyya see *Triaud J.-L.* La légende noire de la Sanusiyya: une confrérie musulmane saharienne sous le regard français (1840–1930). 2 vols. P., 1995.

[68] *Depont O., Coppolani X.* Les confréries religieuses musulmanes. Publié sous le patronage de M. Jules Cambons, gouverneur générale de l'Algérie. P., 1897. P. 83 and 93.

[69] Ibid. P. 102–115.

particular religious creed or philosophical doctrine. As with Le Chatelier, Depont and Coppolani considered Sufi brotherhoods to be a major threat to French colonial presence in North Africa. Therefore, they insisted that any attempt at resistance on the part of the Sufis should be immediately and forcefully suppressed. Should the French authorities show any vacillation, it may be interpreted by the malcontents as a sign of weakness, resulting in a widespread bloodshed.[70]

The usefulness of French colonial scholarship on the Maghrib has been a matter of academic disputes. Some Western academics have recently argued that, shorn of its colonial agendas, it can provide valuable first-hand data about the conditions and structures of North African Sufi brotherhoods in the nineteenth—early twentieth centuries. Others, following Edward Said, insist that the faulty ideological premises of French colonial scholars have effectively rendered their works unusable, for their biases determined the ways in which they selected and presented their "field" data to their readers. Therefore, any attempt to separate these "facts" from theoretical premises under which they were accumulated is doomed to failure.[71]

Similar concerns can be raised about Western studies of Sufism in the other parts of the Muslim world during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Given the importance of organized Sufism in Ottoman politics and social life, there is little wonder that it attracted close attention of Western observers. We have already mentioned the fundamental study of Ottoman Sufism by the American diplomat John P. Brown. Similar studies were produced by German and British scholars, such as Georg Jacob, Hans Joachim Kissling, Franz Babinger, Lucy Garnett, Frederick William Hasluck, and several others. In India, the study of Sufism by British colonial academics in the second half of the nineteenth century exhibited the political concerns and imperial anxieties similar to those of contemporary French scholarship. There it evolved against the background of academic musings over the nature of Islam's contribution (whether negative or positive) to Indian civilization.

In Imperial Russia, interest in Sufism, which in nineteenth-century Russian literature was called *dervishestvo*, *miuridizm*, and *zikrizm*, was sparked by Russia's colonial ambitions on its southern borders as well as its geopolitical rivalry with the Ottoman Empire, which, as we know, was home to numerous Sufi brotherhoods. Russian views of Sufism and its representatives mirrored those of the French and the British. Among its various manifestations, Caucasian *miuridizm*[72] was viewed by Russian authors as particularly detrimental to Russian colonial aspirations. The negative tone of Russian academic and journalistic coverage of *miuridizm* was determined by the fierce resistance to the Russian conquest on the part of the mountaineers of Daghestan and Chechnya throughout the first part of the nineteenth century (the so-called "Caucasian War"). Russian writers depicted the leaders of the local branches of the Naqshbandi *tariqa(t)* as calculating politicians who had no scruples about exploiting the "blind fanaticism" of their misguided Sufi followers (Rus. *miuridy*) to further their political and military ambitions. Thus, for instance, the followers of Imam Shamil (Shamwil), who belonged to the Khalidi branch of the Naqshbandi Sufi order, were portrayed by Russian academics, military commanders and colonial administrators[73] as the instigators and backbone of the anti-Russian resistance.[74] Similar apprehensions were expressed by Russian colonial officials and observers in Central Asia, where at least one rebellion was attributed to

[70] Ibid. P. 279–289.

[71] *Burke*. The Sociology of Islam. P. 87–88.

[72] From the Arabic *murid*, "Sufi disciple".

[73] In some cases, these three functions were combined in one and the same individual; my discussion is based on the analysis of the works by *Khanykov N.* O miuridakh i miurudizme (an offprint of a journal article; no date or place of publication; Library of the Institute for Oriental Studies, St. Petersburg Branch) and *Kazem-Bek A.M.* Izbrannye sochineninia. Baku, 1985.

[74] I have discussed Russian perceptions of *miuridizm* in my article Sufism as an Explanatory Paradigm and will not repeat myself here.

the "agitation" of the local Sufi masters called *ishans*.[75] Nineteenth-century Russian perceptions of mystical Islam are summarized in the fundamental work by Piotr Pozdnev, who explained the purpose of his study as follows:

> For the Russian [readers] the knowledge of *dervishestvo*[76] is highly desirable on account of its profound influence on our new Muslim subjects... Besides, the dervishes (*dervishi*), as history shows, are capable of being the most dangerous and elusive agitators against the [state] order.[77]

Elsewhere, Pozdnev accused the "dervishes" of "inciting in [the Muslim] masses hatred and hostility against the Russians" and of "resistance to royal edicts".[78] Statements such as this seem to corroborate Said's thesis regarding Orientalism's connivance and complicity in the European colonial project. At the same time, colonial agendas are not nearly as strongly pronounced in the works of "armchair" scholars, who were genuinely (and oftentimes passionately) concerned with reconstructing Sufism's early history. At the same time, as we have seen, their works evince biases of a different kind, namely, the conviction that Islam is incapable of producing a sophisticated spirituality and theory associated with the "philosophical Sufism" of Ibn [al-] 'Arabi and his school—a conviction that compelled them to search for its foreign roots and antecedents. The link between this conviction, which may be traced to the long-standing Western belief in the superiority of Christianity over other religious traditions, and the European colonial project is not as straightforward, although it is certainly not unrelated to Europe's self-image as a bearer of *mission civilisatrice*. On the other hand, the substantial efforts by Western academics to unravel the complex phenomenon of Islamic mysticism cannot, in my view at least, be summarily attributed to their pragmatic desire to advance, rationalize and justify the European colonization of the Muslim world. We shall return to this issue in the subsequent narrative.

5. The Founding Discourses

Great strides were made in the study of Sufism by scholars whose academic careers straddle the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This was the period of the titans of European Islamology whose intellectual legacy was destined to shape the subsequent development of the entire discipline. Their knowledge of Islam was encyclopedic and, with the exception of Louis Massignon and Margaret Smith, none of them made Sufism their exclusive focus.[79] At the same time, these scholars were determined to identify its place and role within the Muslim intellectual universe. Preoccupied with Sufi teachings they were less interested in Sufism's institutional and organizational dimensions. This focus on Sufism's theoretical dimensions reflected their philological training. As with their predecessors, the question of Sufism's beginnings loomed large in their scholarship. Thus, in an attempt to identify the provenance of mystical piety in Islam the great Hungarian scholar Ignaz Goldziher

[75] See *Nalivkin V.* Ocherk blagotvoritel'nosti u osedlykh tuzemtsev Turkestanskogo kraia // Vladimir Nalivkin (ed.). Sbornik materialov po musul'manstvu. Vol. 2. St. Petersburg–Tashkent, 1900. P. 138–147; *Mikhailov F.* Religioznye vozzreniia turkmen zakaspiiskoi oblasti // Vladimir Nalivkin (ed.). Sbornik materialov po musul'manstvu. Vol. 2. P. 85–103; *Veselovskii N.* Pamiatnik Khodzhi Akhrara v Samarkande // Vostochnye zametki. Sbornik statei i issledovanii professorov i prepodavatelei vostochnykh iazykov Imperatorskogo St. Peterburgskogo universiteta. St. Petersburg, 1895. P. 321–335; for a recent reconstruction of the "Sufi-led" Andijan rebellion see *Babadjanov* (*Babadžanov*) *B.* Dukchi-ishan // Islam na territorii byvshei Rossiiskoi imperii. Part 2. M., 1999. P. 35–37.

[76] From the Persian *dervish*, "mendicant".

[77] *Pozdnev P.* Dervishi v musul'manskom mire. Orenburg, 1886. P. I–II.

[78] Ibid. P. 304–327.

[79] It should be noted that Massignon wrote on topics other than Sufism; however, Sufism was definitely his primary field of study, which prompted Edward Said to accuse him of overemphasizing Sufism vis-à-vis "the main doctrinal system of Islam" (*Said E.* Orientalism. P. 272).

(1850–1921) posited two principal sources of Sufism.[80] The first, characterized as "ascetic-practical", was, in his view, "indigenous" to Islam. It was inspired by the frugal and world-renouncing ways of the Prophet and some of his close companions, such as Abu Dharr and 'Abdallah b. 'Amr b. al-'As.[81] The other source, which Goldziher dubbed "mystic-speculative", was "imported" into Islam after it had come into contact with the culturally sophisticated societies of the Middle East and South Asia. The "ascetic-practical" impulse shaped the response of many devout Muslims to the "secularization" and "mundane" character of the Muslim state under the Umayyads. The "mystic-speculative" element was initially borrowed from Neo-Platonism and later augmented by elements of other religious traditions, especially those which emphasized the idea of love of God and union with him (e. g., Gnosticism). According to Goldziher, the idea of mystical love of God reached its culmination in the teaching of al-Hallaj (d. 310/922), who deliberately sought martyrdom in order to reunite with his divine Beloved. In his influential study of Islamic exegesis, Goldziher was probably the first Western scholar to turn his attention to Sufi methods of Qur'an interpretation. Sufi exegetes embraced the allegorical method, which set them apart from "mainstream" Sunni Qur'an commentators, who were primarily concerned with historical, legal and philological aspects of the Muslim scripture. In Goldziher's view, the Sufi fascination with the allegorical interpretation of the scripture bears a close resemblance to (and was probably derived from) the Shi'i and Isma'ili "esoteric" views of the Islamic revelation[82] that was aimed at discovering in it hidden allusions to the special role of their *imam*s and as well as elements of Neo-Platonic emanationist cosmology. In this regard, Goldziher can be seen as the pioneer of the study of Sufi exegesis, which eventually emerged as a special branch of Sufi studies.[83]

According to Goldziher, in the eastern areas of the Muslim world Islamic mysticism came under the influence of Buddhism and Hinduism in both theory (e. g., the concepts of *atman* and *nirvana* parallel the Sufi ideas of *fana'* and *mahw/istihlak*) and practice (the use of the rosary, vegeterianism, voluntary poverty and itinerant lifestyle patterned on the life of the Buddha).[84] Hence, according to Goldziher, "[In] a historical assessment of Sufism, one must constantly take into account the Indian contribution to the evolution of this religious system whose first growth was out of Neo-Platonism".[85] Goldziher also believed that from its beginnings in a simple monastic piety and renunciant life-style (probably borrowed from Christian monasticism), Sufism evolved into a complex metaphysical and cosmological doctrine of Neo-Platonic inspiration, which, in its turn, engendered a pantheistic concept of the world, in which the individuality of the mystic is dissolved completely in divine existence—a notion reminiscent (and in all likelihood derived from) the Indian religions.[86] In Goldziher's view (which is still being upheld by many Western specialists on Sufism), the work of the great Muslim theologian al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) marked the all-important turning point in Sufism's history. It was he who "brought Sufism out of its isolation from the

[80] For a summary of Goldziher's views of the evolution of Sufism, see *Goldziher I.* Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law. Trans. Andras and Ruth Hamori. Princeton, 1981. P. 116–166.

[81] Goldziher, however, was careful to point out that many Qur'anic passages and the Prophet's teaching (Sunna) discouraged excessive asceticism, especially celibacy. However, such anti-ascetic injunctions existed side-by-side with exhortations to frugality and self-abnegation, which were embraced by the first Muslim ascetics; ibid. P. 116–131.

[82] *Goldziher I.* Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung. Leiden, 1920. P. 180–309; *idem.* Introduction. P. 138–140.

[83] See, e. g., *Gril D.* Le commentaire du verset de la lumière d'après Ibn 'Arabi // Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 90 (1990). P. 179–187; *idem.* La lecture supérieure du Coran selon ibn Barraǧan // Arabica, 47 (2000). P. 510–522; *Nwyia P.* Le tafsir mystique attribué à Ǧa'far Sadiq // Mélanges de l'Univesité St. Joseph, 43 (1968). P. 182–230; *idem.* Exégèse coranique et langage mystique: Nouvel essai sur le lexique technique des mystiques musulmans. Beyrut, 1970; *Böwering G.* The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam: The Qur'anic Hermeneutics of the Sufi Sahl al-Tustari (d. 283/896). B.–N. Y., 1980.

[84] *Goldziher.* Introduction. P. 140–144; *Duka Th.* The Influence of Buddhism Upon Islam. Review of I. Goldziher. A Buddhismus hatása az Iszlamna // Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society. 1904. P. 125–141.

[85] *Goldziher.* Introduction. P. 146.

[86] *Goldziher.* Die Richtungen. P. 180 and *Waardenburg J.-J.* L'Islam dans le miroir de l'Occident. Paris–The Hague, 1963. P. 75.

dominant conception of religion and established it as a standard element of the Muslim believer's life".[87] Goldziher's analysis of al-Ghazali's work, especially the *Revivification of the Sciences of Religion* reveals his genuine fascination with al-Ghazali's attempts to reform Islam or, in Goldziher's own words, "to instill new life into the dry bones of the prevailing Islamic theology".[88] For him, al-Ghazali was a scholar of exceptional intellectual stature, whose imposing authority helped to integrate Sufism into the body of "official" Islam. As we shall see, Goldziher's ideas proved to be extremely influential and became a stock-in-trade element in many later studies of Sufism in the West.

While Goldziher's investigations were based almost exclusively on Sufi texts from various periods, his Dutch colleague Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936) combined archival work with field observations of "Islam in practice" due to his status as a high-ranking colonial officer in the service of the Dutch state.[89] His awareness of sometimes dramatic discrepancies between the injunctions of normative Islam and the situation "on the ground" made him sensitive to the dangers of generalizing about the Islamic religion and its followers. As with Goldziher, Snouck Hurgronje considered Sufism to be a product of Islam's encounter with pre-Islamic religious and philosophical systems, namely Neo-Platonism, Christianity, and, somewhat later, Hinduism and Buddhism.[90] Snouck Hurgronje rejected the attempts by Louis Massignon to derive Islamic mysticism exclusively from the Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet.[91] For the Dutch scholar, Islam was first and foremost a "cross" between Judaism and Christianity, both of which contained mystical elements that contributed to the rise of Sufism. Snouck Hurgronje discerned several principal trends within mystical Islam: (a) "sensual" that is derived from the personal experience of the deity by the mystic, who usually couches it into bacchic or erotic images and symbols; (b) "moral and ethical", which impels the mystical seeker to cleanse his soul of all mundane attachments and to prepare it for the contemplation of God through austere ascetic exercises, pious meditation and acts of self-abnegation; (c) "speculative", which was formed under the influence of the Neo-Platonic doctrine of emanation[92] and gradually evolved into a full-blown mystical metaphysics. In addressing the causes of the quick dissemination of ascetic and mystical tendencies among ordinary Muslims Snouck Hurgronje cited their disenchantment with the dry scholasticism and arcane theorizing of Muslim jurists and theologians. This disenchantment was acutely perceived and eloquently articulated by al-Ghazali who, in Snouck Hurgronje's opinion, "rejected" the study of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and speculative theology (*kalam*) in favor of the intuitive experiential knowledge claimed by the Sufis.[93] According to Snouck Hurgronje, by emphasizing God's immanent, immediate presence in the empirical world Sufi doctrines inevitably came into conflict with the Qur'anic idea of God's absolute transcendence vis-a-vis his creation.[94] This feature of Sufism, in his view, along with its tolerance toward other religions and beliefs, allowed it to transcend the intolerant and exclusivist spirit of exoteric Islam and thereby rendered it a perfect forum for dialogue with other religious traditions.[95]

While both Goldziher and Snouck Hurgronje were, in the final analysis, sympathetic toward Sufism (or at least some of its manifestations),[96] the doyen of German Orientalism Carl

[87] *Idem*. Introduction. P. 160.

[88] Ibid. P. 161.

[89] See *Waardenburg*. L'Islam. P. 19–20.

[90] As quoted in *Goldziher*. Introduction. P. 146.

[91] *Snouck Hurgronje Ch.* Verspreide Geschriften/Gesammelte Schriften. 5 vols. Bonn–Leipzig, 1923–1927. P. 746.

[92] Ibid. P. 741–745.

[93] Ibid. P. 738; for a recent re-assessment of al-Ghazali's attitude toward *kalam* see *Dallal A.* Ghazali and the Perils of Interpretation // Journal of the American Oriental Society, 122, 4 (2002). P. 773–787.

[94] *Snouck Hurgronje*. Verspreide Geschriften. P. 742.

[95] *Waardenburg*. L'Islam. P. 77–78.

[96] In accord with his fascination with rational tendencies within Islam, Goldziher took a rather dim view of the Sufi claims to intuitive, irrational knowledge; at the same time, as a liberally minded intellectual he admired Sufism openness to other belief systems (*Goldziher*. Introduction. P. 150–153).

Becker (1876–1933) was much less sanguine. For him, Sufism's "obsession" with the internal life of the individual amounted to "the barren gymnastics of the soul" and, in its extreme forms, to the religious "nihilism" which logically leads its followers to "unbelief and pantheism". Sufism, in Becker's view, serves no practical purpose, since it inculcates in its adepts fruitless quietism and indifference toward the conditions of the world around them. Becker's low opinion of Sufism can be attributed to Lutheran convictions as well as his political career and active social stance:[97] for several years he served as Germany's minister of culture.[98]

Another German scholar, Richard Hartmann (1881–1965), made Sufism his primary area of specialization. Focusing on what he regarded as the "classical" period of Sufism's history and its major representative Abu 'l-Qasim al-Qushayri (d. 465/1072),[99] Hartmann made an attempt to resolve the problem of the origins of the Sufi movement in Islam. His analysis of the work of al-Qushayri was informed in part by Becker's notion of Islam as "a [typical] sample of religious syncretism". In accord with this premise, Hartmann attempted to trace some principal Sufi concepts back to their "origins" in external religious and philosophical traditions, especially Hinduism, Manichaeism, Shamanism and Mithra's cult. Since these belief systems enjoyed wide currency in the Muslim East, especially in Khurasan, which was al-Qushayri's homeland (as well as that of other master architects of the "classical" Sufi tradition), the latter, in Hartmann's view, could not help but integrate them into Sufism's teachings. Within Islam, Hartmann noticed some striking similarities between Sufi and Shi'i esotericism[100]—an idea that, as we shall soon see, was brought to fruition in the works of Henry Corbin and Seyyed Hossein Nasr. At the same time, Hartmann acknowledged that these obvious parallels between Sufism and non-Islamic religious systems may, at closer examination, turn out to be mere coincidences. Hence his constant caveats and reluctance to pass a final verdict on the issue of Sufism's roots.[101] In the end, he proved to be incapable of breaking away from the dominant intellectual paradigm of his age, which encouraged scholars to regard similarities between religious teachings and intellectual paradigms as evidence of causal relations between them. Typical in this respect is his statement about "Christian influences"[102] on Sufi doctrines and practices:

> Monasticism and Sufism are [like] brother and sister. Both have their roots in the soul of the Oriental man..., therefore there is little wonder in that the younger sister studied under [her] elder brother.[103]

One may summarize Hartmann thesis thus: Sufism is a product of numerous influences, both external and internal to Islam. Given the diversity and considerable number of these influences, it is hardly possible to single out any one of them as the "principal source" of Sufi piety and thought. Syncretism is thus can be seen as the chief characteristic not only of Sufism as a whole but also of the teachings and practices of its individual representatives. In Hartmann's opinion all these diverse elements were digested, reconciled and synthesized in the work of al-Junayd al-Baghdadi (d. 297/910), who can rightfully be considered the real founder of the "classical" Sufi tradition.

Hartmann's interest in the roots of Islamic mysticism was shared by many of his learned contemporaries. In his monumental *Literary History of Persia* the British scholar Edward

[97] *Batunskii M.* Iz istorii zapadnoevropeiskogo vostokovedeniia perioda imperializma (K. Bekker) // Nauchnye trudy i soobscheniia AN Uzbekskoi SSR. 2. Tashkent, 1961. P. 314–323.

[98] *van Ess J.* From Wellhausen to Becker: The Emergence of Kulturgeschichte in Islamic Studies // Islamic Studies: A Tradition and Its Problems. Ed. by Malcolm Kerr. Malibu, CA, 1980. P. 27–28.

[99] *Hartmann R.* Al-Kuschairi's Darstellung des Sufitums. B., 1914.

[100] *Idem.* Zur Frage nach der Herkunft und den Anfängen des Sufitums // Der Islam, 6 (1916). P. 40–41.

[101] Ibid. P. 50, 59, 63, etc.

[102] He, however, acknowledged that these "Christian influences" in turn included "foreign" elements, such as Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism, ibid. P. 62–64.

[103] Ibid. P. 58–59.

Browne (1862–1926) outlined several approaches to this issue in the Orientalist literature of his age. One is to view Sufism as a natural development of the esoteric elements inherent in the Qur'an and the teachings of the prophet Muhammad, which renders meaningless any quest for its "external" origins. According to the other approach (Edward Palmer *et al.*), Sufism is an Indo-Persian reaction to the "Semitic" religion introduced by the Arabs. The third thesis is to consider Neo-Platonism to be at the origin of mystical tendencies in Islam. Finally, according to the fourth thesis, Sufism arose as a more-or-less independent trend within Islam only to be impregnated by "foreign" influences at the later stages of its evolution. This thesis seems to have been Browne's own position.[104] Like Palmer, he averred that Sufism had "its chief home, if not the centre and well-spring, in Persia".[105]

Taking his cue from von Kremer's monumental study of the history of Islamic ideas, the British-American missionary and scholar Douglas Macdonald (1865–1943) proposed the following tripartite classification of intellectual trends in Islamic mysticism: 1) the first trend evolved from the ascetic and quietist elements of Muhammad's teachings into an ascetical-mystical piety that was accepted by the majority of Muslim scholars as "orthodox", especially following al-Ghazali's momentous "reconciliation" of "official" Islam and Islamic mysticism;[106] 2) the "speculative" trend that developed under a strong influence of Neo-Platonism and Eastern Christianity (monasticism, the Pseudo Dionysius-Areopagite, Stephan bar Sudaili, etc.); 3) the "pantheistic" tendency; introduced into Islam by al-Bistami and al-Hallaj; it was in its essence "alien" to the Islamic doctrine of a transcendent and inscrutable God.[107] While these ideas were rather common for his age, Macdonald's attempts to consider mystical experience in Islam from the viewpoint of parapsychology (i. e., as an "auto-hypnosis" or "auto-suggestion" of sorts) were novel.[108] Macdonald's fascination with the figure of al-Ghazali was, on the other hand, typical of the Orientalist scholars of his generation who, wittingly or not, approached Islam from a theological perspective. The Muslim thinker's rejection of rationalist philosophy in favor of an intuitive, irrational perception of God resonated with their rejection of the ascendancy of the post-Enlightenment infatuation with "pure reason" and rationality in Europe and the US.[109]

An important and long-lasting contribution to the study of Islamic mysticism was made by the prolific British scholar, Reynold A. Nicholson (1868–1945). A man of unusual linguistic talents who mastered the three principal languages of "classical" Islam, he, through his study of the Sufi poetry of Jalal al-Din Rumi, came to the realization of the necessity to reconstruct the intellectual evolution of Islamic mysticism.[110] This realization impelled Nicholson to immerse himself in a life-long study of early Sufi literature that contained the "rudiments" of the later Sufi intellectual universe. In Nicholson's view, later Sufi ideas and literary conventions were simply incomprehensible to anyone who was not familiar with their antecedents as explicated by the Sufi "classics" of the ninth and tenth centuries C.E.[111] As with many of his predecessors and contemporaries, Nicholson adhered to the thesis of "multiple influences" and advised his readers against trying to derive such a complex phenomenon as Sufism from any single source, be it Eastern Christianity, Neo-Platonism, Gnosticism, Buddhism, etc. Yet, in

[104] *Browne E.* Literary History of Persia. 2 vols. L., 1902–1906, vol. 1. P. 418–419.

[105] As quoted in *Smith M.* The Sufi Path of Love. L., 1954. P. 14.

[106] *Macdonald D.* The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam. Chicago, 1909. P. 229–232.

[107] *Idem.* Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory. N. Y., 1903. P. 181–182.

[108] *Waardenburg.* L'Islam. P. 160.

[109] For some further examples of the Christian "appropriation" of al-Ghazali see *Gairdner W.H.T.* Al-Ghazzali's *Mishkat al-Anwar* and the Ghazali-Problem // Der Islam. Bd. 5. Strassburg–Berlin, 1914. P. 121–153; *Obermann J.* Die religiöse und philosophische Subjektivismus Ghazzali's. Lpz., 1921; *Frick H.* Ghazali's Selbstbiographie: Ein Vergleich mit Augustins Konfessionen. Lpz., 1919, etc.

[110] *Nicholson R.* Selected Poems from Divan-i Shams-i Tabriz. Cambridge, 1952.

[111] *Nicholson R.* (ed.). The Kitab al-luma' fi 'l-tasawwuf of Abu Nasr 'Abdallah... al-Sarraj al-Tusi. London–Leiden, 1914. P. VIII.

his view, it was equally absurd to consider Sufism to be an exclusively Islamic phenomenon that organically grew out of Qur'anic precepts and the Prophet's custom (Sunna).[112]

Similar hypotheses of the origins of mystical tendencies in Islam were advanced by Nicholson's colleagues, especially the Dutch Arendt Wensinck (1882–1939), the Swede Henrik Nyberg (1889–1974) and the British Margaret Smith (1884–1970). Each of them recognized that the mystical movement in Islam from its very beginning was exposed to a number of different influences, yet they tended to emphasize the role of one such influence over against the others. Their choice of influence usually reflected their own academic background and intellectual predilections. Thus, Wensinck, who specialized in the study of Eastern Christianity and Judaism (especially in their Neo-Platonic interpretations), considered them to be the principal source of Sufi ideas and practices. For him, Sufism was an Islamic version of "Semitic[113] mysticism", which developed under a strong influence of Neo-Platonic philosophy. As for "eastern influences" (such as Hinduism and Buddhism) they were inessential or marginal[114] insofar as they were alien to the monotheistic spirit of the "Semitic mentality". In particular, Wensinck considered the interaction between the Christian (Aramaic) and Islamic (Arabic) variants of "Semitic mysticism" to be a two-way process. While in the beginning Muslim ascetics and mystics borrowed their theories and practices from the Christian monks of Syria and Iraq, by the thirteenth century C.E. Sufi ideas had come to serve as a source of inspiration for Eastern Christian mystics.

An expert on ancient and Hellenistic Greek philosophy, Henrik Nyberg saw no reason to go beyond it in his quest for Sufism's origins. His analysis of the doctrines of the great Andalusian-Arab mystic Ibn [al-]'Arabi (d. 638/1242) reflects his concerted effort to trace the latter's views back to their Greek antecedents. As a result, in Nyberg's study, Ibn [al-]'Arabi is portrayed as a Greek-style philosopher par excellence, whose use of Qur'anic imagery and exegesis was a mere "window-dressing" deemed to conceal the true sources (essentially "alien to Islam") of his mystical thought.[115]

Margaret Smith's interest in Islamic mysticism was motivated by her study of the Christian monastic movement in Egypt, Syria and Iraq.[116] As Wensinck, she considered the rise of Sufism to be a natural continuation of the Christian mystical tradition:

> It is not difficult to trace the connection between these teachings on asceticism and self-discipline, which appear both in the Qur'an and the Traditions, and the doctrines of Christianity with which... the Muslim had every opportunity to become acquainted in the first centuries of the Islamic era.[117]

Hence, all major aspects of Sufi theory and practice, such as the mortification of the flesh, night vigils, vows and other self-imposed strictures can be traced back to the monastic tradition of Eastern Christianity.[118] Smith's emphasis on the Christian roots of Islamic mysticism led her to question Nicholson's theory of Neo-Platonic influences. In her opinion, such influences were never direct; rather, they were always mediated by the teachings and writings of the Church fathers (e. g., St. Augustine, the scholars of the school of Alexandria, and Aramaic-writing monks from Syria and Iraq). One channel of such Christian influences on early Islam was numerous marriages between Arab conquerors and Christian women, who

[112] See, e. g., *Nicholson*. A Historical Enquiry, *passim*; The Mystics. P. 1–27.

[113] By "Semitic" he meant Jewish, Aramaic and Arabic mystical traditions, since each of them expressed itself in a Semitic language.

[114] *Wensinck A.* Bar Hebraeus's Book of the Dove together with Some Chapters from His Ethikon. Leiden, 1919, P. IXXX and CX.

[115] *Nyberg H.* Kleinere Schriften des Ibn al-'Arabi. Leiden, 1919, *passim.*

[116] See, e. g., *Smith M.* Studies in Early Islamic Mysticism in the Near and Middle East. Oxf., 1995, P. 10–33 and 47–102.

[117] Ibid. P. 136.

[118] Ibid. P. 246–247.

inculcated Christian values and ideals (including asceticism and mysticism) in their children.[119] The latter, in turn, disseminated them among the members of the early Muslim community. Even "pantheism", which was adopted by some Sufi groups was not borrowed by them from India and Central Asia, but rather from the writings of some Christian mystics, such as St. Clement of Alexandria, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Macarious of Egypt, Aphraates the Monk, and Isaac of Nineveh.[120] Smith's occasional references to universal "age-old desire of the human soul for God and its longing to attain a communion with Him"[121] failed to offset the obvious pro-Christian bias of her academic work. At the same time, Smith's desire to treat the ascetic and mystical movements of the Hellenistic and early medieval Middle East in a comparative perspective was illuminating and timely.

The tendency to see Sufism as a trend in Islam most akin to Christianity found its most enthusiastic supporter in the great Spanish Arabist Miguel Asin Palacios (1871–1944). For him, Sufi spirituality (which he admired) was, in essence, a borrowing from the Christian religion. In accord with this premise, the sophisticated mystical teaching of the great Andalusian-Arab thinker Ibn [al-]'Arabi was but "Christianized Islam" (*islam cristinanizado*). In Asin Palacios's studies, such great Muslim thinkers as al-Ghazali and Ibn [al-]'Arabi were consistently compared to the great Spanish mystics San Juan de la Cruz and Santa Teresa of Jesus. Asin Palasios was careful to emphasize that the exchange of ideas was not unidirectional; Islam, too, occasionally influenced Christian theology and culture (as was the case with Dante, whose portrayal of heaven and hell were, according to Asin Palasios, influenced by Muslim eschatological teachings).[122] Yet, in the final analysis, Islam's intellectual and spiritual vitality organically sprang from its appropriation of some key elements of the Christian religion.

The work of the French scholar Louis Massignon (1883–1962) marked a radical departure from the Orientalist obsession with the "extraneous roots" of Islamic mysticism. After analyzing the technical terminology of early Sufism (up to the fourth/tenth century), Massignon arrived at the conclusion that its origins can be found in the Qur'anic text itself and, therefore, one need not look any further. While the original meaning of the Qur'anic revelation was reinterpreted by the creators of the Sufi tradition in accordance with their mystical experiences, this does not negate the fact that the principal Sufi ideas rested on a profound meditation on, and internalization of, the meaning of the Muslim scripture, not on any sources external to Islam.[123] According to Massignon, the fact of borrowing from such sources was difficult, if not impossible to prove, unless one could produce a decisive textual evidence to substantiate it. In most cases, such evidence simply did not exist. Why, then, not assume that certain similarities between Sufism and other mystical traditions are but the analogical workings of the human psyche. On this view, there is no "genetic" or "causal" relationship between, say, the Sufi concept of *fana'* and the Hindu notion of *dhyana.*[124] Therefore, in Massignon's view, Sufism is essentially an "autochthonous" phenomenon within Islam that cannot be satisfactory explained by references to any "foreign" influences.[125] Ascetic tendencies in Islam emerged as a result of the process of an intense and personal "internalization" of the Islamic revelation by a few otherworldly-minded companions of the Prophet.

[119] Ibid. P. 112–113 and 141.

[120] Ibid. P. 47–102 and 256.

[121] Ibid. P. 256.

[122] *Morris J.W.* Ibn 'Arabi and His Interpreters: Part 1. Recent French Translations // Journal of the American Oriental Society, 106, 3 (1986). P. 539–564; Part 2. Influences and Interpretations, ibid., 106, 4 (1986). P. 733–756; Part 3. Influences and Interpretations (Conclusion), ibid., 107, 1 (1987). P. 101–120; See pt. 1. P. 542–543.

[123] See *Massignon L.* Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane. 2d ed. P., 1954. P. 26–27; cf. P. 45–48 in the English translation (*Massignon L.* Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Islamic Mysticism. Trans. from the French with an introduction by Benjamin Clark; foreword by Herbert Mason. Notre Dame, IN, 1997).

[124] *Arberry.* An Introduction. P. 49.

[125] *Waardenburg.* L'Islam. P. 154.

Their ascetic propensities were gradually impregnated by mystical ideas which found ready acceptance among the Muslims of Iraq and Khurasan. Such mystical ideas, too, were extracted from the Qur'anic text and its exegesis, e. g., the famous legend of Muhammad's "night journey and ascension" alluded to in *sura* 17 of Qur'an, which can be interpreted as a "purely Islamic"[126] pre-figuration of the experience of mystical quest and the subsequent entering of the seeker into the immediate presence of God. Gradually, there emerged in Sufism the "heretical" notion of the possibility of an identification of the mystic and his divine object, which can be seen as the Islamic analogue of the Christian doctrine of incarnation.[127] This notion reached its ultimate expression in the preaching of the "mystical martyr" al-Husayn b. Mansur al-Hallaj (d. 310/922), whose life and death symbolized the apotheosis of mystical experience in Islam.[128] After his execution on charges of "incarnationism" (*hulul*), Sufism entered a protracted period of spiritual "fossilization" and "decline" which was characterized by the domination of the doctrine of "existential monism" associated with Ibn [al-]'Arabi (d. 638/1240) and his school. Among the causes of that "decline", according to Massignon, was the adulteration of the "primeval" mystical experience symbolized by al-Hallaj with the "rationalist" and "speculative" element artificially transplanted onto Islam from external sources, especially "Hellenistic philosophy".[129]

Massignon's conceptions of Sufism's history and his classification of various types of mystical experience in Islam have been detailed elsewhere[130] and need not be repeated here. I will limit myself to a few remarks regarding his overall approach to Sufism and its impact on subsequent Western scholarship on the subject. While, on the face of it, Massignon advocated the theory of the Qur'anic origins of Islamic mysticism, in his spirited and deeply sympathetic portrayal of al-Hallaj he drew an implicit parallel between his martyrdom and the passion of Jesus Christ.[131] In a similar vein, al-Hallaj's theory of two natures, human and divine (*nasut/lahut*), which can be united in certain perfected human individuals, was, in Massignon's mind, nothing but an Islamic version of Christology.[132] The fact that he elevated al-Hallaj over all other Sufis both before and after him betrays Massignon's Christian predilections[133] and his implicit—and probably unconscious—desire to "Christianize" the Sufi martyr. In this, paradoxically, Massignon has found himself in the same camp with another Catholic student of Sufism, Miguel Asin Palacios, whose work was addressed above. A characteristic feature of Massignon's approach to al-Hallaj in particular and Sufism as a whole is his reliance on the hermeneutical method developed by Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911).[134] According to Massignon, a true cognition of a mystical phenomenon becomes possible only through a profound transformation of the cognizant subject by the object of his cognizance. By consistently re-living and internalizing the mystical experience of al-Hallaj, Massignon strove not just to explain it to his contemporaries, but also to participate in the "sanctity" and "divine grace" that underpinned it.[135] In other words, Massignon's goal in his examination of

[126] In fact, the idea of the frightful journey of man to the throne of God can, too, be traced to sources outside Islam, such, e. g., *merkabah* mysticism in Judaism, see Hodgson, vol. 2. P. 202–203 and *Scholem G.* Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism. N. Y., 1995. P. 40–79.

[127] Despite his assertions to the contrary, Massignon represents al-Hallaj as essentially a Christ-like figure seeking redemption of his fellow Muslims through an act of self-sacrifice, see *Baldick J.* Massignon: Man of Opposites // Religious Studies, 23, 1987. P. 34–35.

[128] *Massignon.* Essai. P. 309–314; cf. P. 209–214 of the English translation.

[129] Ibid. P. 62, 285, 315–316; cf. P. 35, 56, 185, 214 of the English translation.

[130] See *Waardenburg.* L'Islam. P. 152–157 *et passim.*

[131] As demonstrated by the very title of his monumental study of al-Hallaj—The Passion of Husain b. Mansur al-Hallaj.

[132] As pointed out by *Nicholson.* The Idea of Personality. P. 30–31.

[133] *Chodkiewicz M.* Le sceau des saints: prophétie et sainteté dans la doctrine d'Ibn Arabi. P., 1986. P. 103 note 3; cf. P. 81, note 15 of the English translation.

[134] *Dilthey.* Introduction, *passim.*

[135] *Waardenburg.* L'Islam. P. 192.

Islamic mysticism was first and foremost to enrich and deepen his own personal experience of the divine. Thus, his work can hardly be described as strictly academic, although in the end one cannot deny that he has contributed in important ways to a better understanding of al-Hallaj's controversial legacy and of the early history of Sufism in general.

Not everyone was convinced by Massignon's insistence on the Qur'anic roots of Islamic mysticism. Among his opponents mention should be made of Max Horten (1874–1945), a distinguished German scholar who specialized in "Oriental philosophies". An expert on the Indian systems of thought, he denied the Neo-Platonic/Christian doctrine of Sufism's origins advanced by Asin Palacios and Nicholson, while at the same time disagreeing with Louis Massignon's "Qur'anic theory". As one would expect from a specialist of his background, he emphasized Indian (especially Vedantic) influences on Sufism, which he detected in the teachings of al-Bistami, al-Junayd, and al-Hallaj. For instance, he claimed that in al-Hallaj we find a typical "Brahmanic thinker",[136] whose teaching flew into the face of the standard Islamic notion of a transcendent God in its emphasis on God's immanent presence in the world and its phenomena.[137] To prove his point, Horten undertook a painstaking study of the terminology of early Sufism, but arrived at the opposite conclusions to those of Massignon. However, in the end, he failed to persuade the majority of his colleagues,[138] who found Massignon's thesis of Sufism's origins to be more convincing, even though they did not necessarily embrace it.

Massignon's study of the formative period of Islamic mysticism inspired many followers. One of them was the Swedish bishop Tor Andrae (1885–1947), who focused his attention on the first Sufi manuals and biographical collections by al-Sulami (d. 412/1021), Abu Nu'aym al-Isbahani (d. 429/1037), and al-Qushayri (d. 465/1072).[139] Andrae's view of the origins of ascetic and mystical elements in Islam was rather ambiguous. As a student of the life of the prophet Muhammad and the early history of Islam, Andrae was aware of the presence of ascetic and mystical tendencies in the Muslim community from its very inception.[140] This idea is aptly captured in his following statement:

> Qur'anic piety can be regarded as a translation into Arabic language and Arabic imagination of that ascetic piety, that monastic religion, which flourished within the Syriac churches of the period... The translation was carried out by a personality whose religious creativity one ought not to underestimate: Muhammad, the Apostle of God.[141]

As we can see, for Andrae, Muhammad's teaching itself was a product of Christian influences. As for the earliest Muslim ascetics and mystics, their worldview was permeated and decisively shaped by the ideas borrowed from the Christian monks and anchorites of Syria and Northern Arabia.[142] Like Massignon, Andrae considered the third/ninth and the fourth/tenth centuries to be a period of the vigorous creative elaboration of mystical theories and practices by a handful of talented pious individuals. It was followed by a gradual "decline" of Sufi spirituality that resulted, at least in part, from the introduction into Sufism of speculative and metaphysical methods that were intrinsically "alien" to the irrationality of mystical experience.

Similar views were maintained by many Western scholars of Islamic mysticism in the 1950s–1960s, including the Norwegian scholar Johannes Pedersen (1883–1977), who rec-

[136] *Horten M.* Review of Asin Palasios' Abenmasarra // Der Islam, 6 (1916). P. 106–110.

[137] *Idem.* Indische Strömungen in der islamischen Mystik. 2 vols. Heidelberg and Leipzig, 1927-28. P. IX and 5.

[138] *Paret R.* The Study of Arabic and Islam at German Universities. Wiesbaden, 1968. P. 28.

[139] These authors and their works are discussed in my Islamic Mysticism. P. 125–132.

[140] *Andrae T.* Islamische Mystiker. Trans. H.C. Crede. Stuttgart, 1960. P. 13–14; cf. P. 8–9 of the English translation (*Andrae T.* In the Garden of Myrtles: Studies in Early Islamic Mystics. Trans. from the Swedish by B. Sharpe. Albany, NY, 1987).

[141] *Andrae.* In the Garden. P. 8.

[142] Ibid. P. 9–15.

ognized the initial presence in Islam of an "ascetic spirit", while viewing the rise of "pure mysticism" (*die echte Mystik*) as a product of foreign influences, since the latter was intrinsically inconsistent with the "Qur'anic concept of God".[143]

To summarize, one can say that by the 1960s the study of Islamic mysticism established its *Sitz im Leben* within the field of Western (primarily European) Orientalism. By building on the foundations established by a small group of nineteenth-century pioneers, their twentieth-century followers generated a considerable body of academic research that included both editions of—for the most part—the earliest Sufi writings and analytical studies of individual Sufi masters, doctrines and practices. Their approaches to Sufism varied, often considerably, reflecting their diverse academic backgrounds and interests on the one hand and their personal intellectual and religious agendas on the other. In most of academic studies of Islamic mysticism from that period the problem of its origins and of external influences on its subsequent development remained at the center of attention. At the risk of oversimplification, one can say that by the 1960s there emerged two major approaches to Sufism. One, which can be characterized as "historicist", emphasized the concrete circumstances of Sufism's evolution across time and space and viewed it as an uninterrupted linear progression of individuals, concepts and ideas.[144] Simultaneously, we observe the tendency to consider Sufism as a kind of "trans-historical" spiritual reality which, while not immune to its concrete social, economical, and political milieu, still enjoyed a certain degree of independence from it in as much as it reflected an invariable set of the "constants" of the human psyche (namely, the eternal human aspiration to and union with the higher reality above it). These two approaches did not necessarily negate each other, as Massignon's masterful investigation of al-Hallaj's legacy finely demonstrates. Rather, it was a matter of academic emphasis and distance between the scholar and his subject. As we have seen, the adherents of the "trans-historical" approach often felt compelled to immerse themselves into a given Sufi tradition in order to examine it from "inside".

The "pragmatic" trend in Sufi studies developed in response to the exigencies of European colonial policies in the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia. Utilitarian and sober, it left its practitioners little room for the empathic appreciation of the Sufi tradition that characterized the work of Nicholson, Massignon or Asin Palacios. While calling it "police-report scholarship"[145] is probably an exaggeration, the field data assembled by colonial administrators-cum-scholars was definitely shaped by their colonial and imperial agendas. At the same time, it would be wrong to write their studies off altogether, especially in view of the scarcity of "impartial" sources, assuming that such existed. In a sense, colonial scholarship that focused on the organizational and social aspects of Sufism felicitously offset the obsession with "classical" Sufi literature that we observe among Western Orientalists associated with universities, seminaries and scholarly societies. Finally, all these approaches to Sufism were closely intertwined and are sometimes found in the work of one and the same scholar, Snouck Hurgronje, being just one example of many.

6. Sufi Studies in Russia and the Soviet Union in the Twentieth Century

The vicissitudes of Russian studies of Islam in general and Sufism in particular were closely linked to the country's tumultuous political history in the twentieth century, especially the Russian revolution of 1917, the establishment of the Communist regime and the imposition of its

[143] *Pedersen J.* Zum Problem der islamischen Mystik // Orientalistische Literaturzeitung, 34 (1931). P. 198–199.

[144] This approach was of course not limited to Sufism and dominated Western scholarship on Islam as a whole; see *Waardenburg*. L'Islam. P. 242–256.

[145] *Vikør*. Sufi and Scholar. P. 11.

ideology on all spheres of intellectual life in the former Soviet Union. The revolution had a profound impact on the attitudes toward, and study of, religions in Soviet Russia and its dominions, including those inhabited by Muslims. In the decades immediately preceding the revolution, approaches to Sufism in Russian scholarship were quite similar to, and usually derivative from, those of the Western scholars discussed in the preceding section. The works of major European Orientalists were pored over by students at the "Oriental" departments of Russian universities in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Kazan. They had a deep formative influence on Russian academic approaches to Islam and its various manifestations, including Sufism.

The two principal Russian authorities on Sufism in pre-revolutionary Russia, Agafangel Krymskii (1871–1942) and Valentin Zhukovskii (1858–1919), specialized in classical Persian poetry. Like their European colleagues, they were well aware that it could not be properly understood and interpreted without at least a modicum of knowledge of Sufi ideas and practices. As many of his European colleagues at the turn of the twentieth century, Krymskii considered Sufism to be essentially "alien", and even outright "hostile", to the spirit of Islamic revelation.[146] It was formed under the pervasive influence of Syrian Christianity and "Buddhist-Persian teachings".[147] In Krymskii's view, "the Arab character was [inherently] incapable of mystical feeling", therefore mystical teachings developed primarily in the Persian cultural and intellectual milieu and met with strong resistance on the part of the "nomocentric" Arabs.[148] Therefore, according to Krymskii, mystical doctrines thrived first and foremost among the Persian-speaking populations of the Muslim East, who infused it with a "pantheistic spirit" that can be traced back to the Buddhist religion.[149] While these intellectual elements were important in and of themselves, the inequitable socio-economic conditions of the early Caliphate facilitated the adoption of mystical ideas and ascetic practices by the Muslim masses. In Krymskii's view, "the periods of Sufism's flowering usually coincide with the times of tremendous suffering of the common folk",[150] when the oppressed masses were forced to seek spiritual consolation in mysticism. This factor accounted for the persistence and relevance of Sufism in Muslim societies.

Krymskii's colleague Valentin Zhukovskii seems to have consciously avoided such broad generalizations. He was more interested in the evolution of concrete Sufi concepts and literary themes. For this purpose, he focused his attention on the earliest layer of Persian literature pertaining to Sufism, namely, the legacy of Abu 'l-Hasan al-Kharaqani (d. 425/1033), 'Abdallah al-Ansari (d. 481/1089), and Abu Sa'id b. Abi 'l-Khayr Mayhani (d. 441/1049). His painstaking edition and analysis of the first Persian treatise on "Sufi science" by al-Jullabi al-Hujwiri (d. between 465/1072 and 469/1077)[151] has retained its usefulness until today and is often being quoted by students of Persian Sufism.[152]

The first Russian Arabist to undertake a serious study of Sufism was Aleksandr Shmidt (Schmidt). A student of Ignaz Goldziher, he devoted his early research to the famous Egyptian scholar and mystic 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha'rani (d. 973/1565).[153] In his lengthy introduction to the study of al-Sha'rani's *œuvre*, Shmidt made a number of important remarks

[146] *Krymskii A.* Ocherk razvitiia sufizma (*tasawwuf*) do kontsa III v. gidzhry // Drevnosti vostochnye. Trudy Vostochnoi komissii Imp. Moskovskogo arkheologicheskogo obschestva. Vol. 2, 1 (1896). P. 2–29; and my Sufism as an Explanatory Paradigm. P. 129.

[147] *Krymskii A.* Ocherk razvitiia. P. 38.

[148] Ibid.

[149] Ibid. P. 48.

[150] Ibid. P. 31.

[151] *Zhukovskii V.* (ed. and trans.). Raskrytie skrytogo za zavesoi (*Kashf al-makhdzhub*) Abu 'l-Khasana Ibn Osmana al-Dzhullabi al-Khudzhviri. Leningrad, 1926.

[152] For an assessment of Zhukoskii's contribution to the study of Persian Sufism and literature, see his obituary in *Barthold* (*Bartol'd*) *V.* Pamiati Zhukovskogo // *Barthold V.* Sochineniia (9 vols). M., 1963, vol. 9. P. 699–703.

[153] For a recent study of his work see *Winter M.* Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt: Studies in the Writings of 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha'rani. New Brunswick, NJ, 1992.

about the Sufi movement in Islam as a whole, emphasizing the methods of the transmission of knowledge and authority from the Sufi master to his disciples, which, at that time, was a little-studied subject. For Shmidt, the popularity of Sufism can be attributed, at least in part, to the dire socio-economic conditions of late medieval Muslim societies, which impelled ordinary believers to seek consolation in God through the mediation of a charismatic Sufi master. However, unlike Krymskii, who did not substantiate his "socio-economic" explanation of Sufism's popularity with any concrete historical evidence, Shmidt provided a wealth of carefully selected historical information about the plight of the Egyptian masses during al-Sha'rani's lifetime. His portrait of the great Egyptian Sufi master was deeply grounded in historical and textual evidence, which makes it, in some respects, unsurpassed down to the present day. We observe al-Sha'rani in a variety of contexts: as a Sufi theorist, a spiritual preceptor, a jurist, an astute diplomat, and a defender of the oppressed and downtrodden.[154]

Parallel to the study of Sufi Islam by academics such as Krymskii, Zhukovskii and Shmidt, we find a substantial body of literature on various aspects of "everyday" Sufism, which was produced by Russian officials in Russia's colonial domains—primarily in the Caucasus and Central Asia. As we have already observed, this kind of literature concentrated on the political and social role of organized Sufism with a view to gauging its potential to resist or impede the metropolis' colonial designs. At the same time, by virtue of their presence "on the ground"[155] authors of these works managed to furnish a wealth of information on how Sufism and its institutions (*tariqa*s, shrine complexes and "holy places") functioned in real life as well as on some Sufi themes—mainly hagiographical narratives—which formed a notable part of local folklore. As in the case with Western scholarship, Russian colonial literature was based on a set of assumptions about the empire's right to subjugate "less-developed" peoples in order to expose them to the fruits of Western civilization.

The Russian revolution of 1917 ushered in the era of a drastic reassessment of earlier academic paradigms followed by the triumph in Soviet academia of the "class-based" approach to history and religion. While some leading Russian Orientalists (e. g., Vladimir Minorsky and Vladimir Iwanov) chose to emigrate, those who remained in the country were forced to toe the Communist party line or, rather, to quote a famous Soviet witticism, "to fluctuate with its fluctuations". Throughout the 1930s–1950s, practically the only serious Soviet scholar of Sufism was Evgenii Berthels (1890–1957),[156] whose collection of articles and essays *Sufism and Sufi Literature* was for several decades the only officially accepted introduction to Sufism in the former Soviet Union.[157] While Berthels' main focus in the volume in question was on Persian Sufi poetry, in a short introductory essay he provided a general survey of Sufism's history, addressing the unavoidable problem of its origins. This essay exhibits Berthels' indebtedness to the "Qur'anic theory" of Louis Massignon, although he also agreed with Nicholson regarding the importance of Neo-Platonic ideas in shaping the development of "speculative Sufism" at a later stage. In all, however, Berthels' academic work was devoted primarily to Persian poetry (both Sufi and non-Sufi) and did not address any broader issues pertaining to Sufism's evolution across the ages, which he, as a scholar of literature, was not equipped to discuss.

[154] *Shmidt (Schmidt) A.* 'Abd al-Wahhab ash-Sha'ranii (1973/1565) i ego kniga Razsypanykh zhemchuzhin. St. Petersburg, 1914.

[155] Many of the studies in question were purely descriptive and ethnographic and showed little concern for the historical and social roots of the phenomena observed.

[156] Vasilii Barthold (Bartol'd) also occasionally wrote about Sufism, but, on the whole, his research interests lay elsewhere.

[157] Pre-revolutionary Russian scholarship, especially in the field of the humanities, was viewed with suspicion by Soviet authorities, as it represented an "alien" ("bourgeois") ideological system. Hence, studies of Sufism by pre-revolutionary scholars were either outright banned or rendered practically unavailable to the general public.

Apart from Berthels, discussions of Sufism in the Soviet literature of the 1930s–1970s were, for the most part, informed by a rather primitive interpretation of the Marxian doctrine of the role of the masses and class struggle in historical processes. In accordance with this interpretation, Sufism was squeezed into the Marxian categories of "reactionary" and "progressive". Sufi movements, which were seen by Marxist scholars as typical expressions of "religious ideology", were for the most part, treated as "reactionary", despite some dissenting voices—especially of scholars in the Muslim republics of the Soviet Union who occasionally tried to "justify" Sufism by portraying it as a vehicle of Islamic "free-thinking" or even an expression of "materialism" and "atheism" in Islam.[158] In most cases, those scholars who dared to depart from the Marxian ideological paradigm and to advance a dissenting view of Sufism were accused of being "stooges of the bourgeoisie" and barred from publishing their works.

In the 1960s–1970s, perceptions of Sufism among Soviet party functionaries and "ideological workers", especially those based in the Muslim republics, were uniformly negative. Thus, Sufi orders in the Muslim republics of the Soviet Union were perceived by Soviet authorities as bulwarks of "religious obscurantism" and "retrograde" religious ideology that had to be overcome by all means necessary, including physical repression.[159] Wittingly or not, such assumptions were appropriated and replicated by scholars in Soviet academia,[160] which had a profound deleterious impact on their heuristic value.

7. Sufi Studies in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century

It is extremely difficult to characterize Sufi studies in the West in the second part of the twentieth century due to their vastness and diversity. I would like to begin with a few general remarks.

First, the Western scholars, whose work was surveyed in the previous sections (especially Goldziher, MacDonald, Gardet and Anawati,[161] Asin Palacios, Andrae, Smith, Nicholson, Wensinck, Massignon, Arberry, and others), laid solid textual and factual foundations for a comprehensive study of Sufism by those who came in their wake. They effectively created a special "Sufi" branch of Islamic studies by providing critical editions of Sufi texts—which they identified as "essential"—while at the same time introducing and "sanctifying" a set of analytical methods, technical terms and general assumptions about the nature of Sufism, especially about which writers should be regarded as its most authoritative exponents and which ones should be declared "marginal" or "inconsequential". Finally, the aforementioned scholars trained a cohort of Muslim academics, who disseminated Western conceptions of Sufi institutions, doctrines, and practices among their coreligionists, thereby providing an alternative reading of the Sufi tradition to that espoused by traditional Muslim theologians.

Second, on the methodological plane, many Western scholars of the 1950s and 1970s continued to rely primarily on philological methods and literary criticism and to concentrate on the written legacy of Sufism. The best Western studies of Sufism from that period by such outstanding scholars as Helmut Ritter, Arthur Arberry and Fritz Meier are based on a me-

[158] In my recent article, I discuss the debates over the nature of Caucasian *miuridizm* in Soviet academic literature and will not repeat myself here; see my Sufism as an Explanatory Paradigm. P. 155–159; for the attempts to present the Sufi movement as an expression of opposition to the "Muslim religious establishment" and the social order it supported see, e. g., *Rzakulizade S.D.* Panteizm v Azerbaidzhane v X–XII vv. Baku, 1982; *Ismatov B.* Panteisticheskaia filosofskaia traditsiia v persidsko-tadzhikskoi poezii IX–XV vv. Dushanbe, 1986; cf. *Zarrinkoob (Zarrinkub) 'A. al-H.* Persian Sufism in Its Historical Perspective // Iranian Studies, 3, 3–4 (1970). P. 210.

[159] For abundant documentary evidence of these anti-Muslim and anti-Sufi attitudes see Yaacov Ro'i's Islam in the Soviet Union: From the Second World War to Gorbachev. N. Y., 2000.

[160] See my review of *Stepaniants*. Sufi Wisdom // Journal of Religion, 75/4 (October 1995). P. 606–607.

[161] Authors of a popular and still influential introduction to Sufism titled Mystique musulmane.

ticulous application of philological methods to the subjects of their study.[162] In addition to publishing original Sufi texts, these and other scholars of the period strove to disseminate knowledge about Sufism among their compatriots by translating what they regarded as the most important Sufi works into European languages. These translations were instrumental in generating continuing interest in Sufism's history and literary legacy among the Western reading public at large.

Third, in retrospect, one can say that Sufi studies have successfully survived the critique of Western Orientalist scholarship launched in the 1960s–1970s by Edward Said, who indicted its representatives for their "complicity" in the Western colonial project and the resultant deliberate "distortion" of Islam's image in the West. While Said's critique forced many Western scholars of the 1980s and 1990s to re-assess their academic work critically and enhanced their awareness of their position as researchers who approach their subjects from outside (and thus seeing in it what they were trained to see), overall, there was surprisingly little "soul-searching" among those of them who specialized in the study of Sufism.[163]

Fourth, while throughout the first half of the twentieth century the bulk of Western scholarship on Sufism was produced by European academics (especially those residing in Austria, Germany, Britain, France, Italy, Holland, Spain, and Russia), by the 1960s the national background of students of Sufism had grown much more diverse. On the one hand, within the three or four decades following World War II, the majority of Western experts on Sufism were no longer based in Europe, but in North America. On the other, Europe's smaller nations (Finland, Norway, Sweden, Yugoslavia, Poland, etc.) established their own centers of Islamic studies, which often housed at least one or two experts on Sufism. In Israel, too, we find a considerable number of academics whose primary interest lay in the study of Sufism. Finally, the first generation of scholars of Sufism—many of them Western-trained—appeared in the Far East, especially in South Korea and Japan.

Fifth, in some ways, the evolution of Sufi studies in the West can be seen as a string of academic continuities or even "intellectual dynasties", whose members succeed one another in (usually, but not always) an uninterrupted progression. Thus, in German-speaking academia, Hartmann was followed by Ritter and Meier, who, in turn, were succeed by Richard Gramlich and Bernd Radtke.[164] In Britain, Nicholson found a prominent heir in Arberry, who, however, left no successor of his intellectual stature.[165] In France, Massignon's magisterial work on al-Hallaj inspired his students Paul Nwyia and Henry Corbin[166] as well as Georges Anawati and Louis Gardet. They were followed by a cohort of French academics, including Michel Chodkiewicz, Giles Veinstein, Marc Gaborieau, Eric Geoffroy and several others. In Russia, Zhukovskii's work was continued by Berthels, who was followed by Oleg Akimushkin and Natalia Prigarina, whose students endeavor to keep the tradition alive despite the economic hardships and cultural upheavals of the post-*perestroika* period.

Sixth, alongside academic studies of Islamic mysticism there emerged a trend whose representatives made Sufism the object of their personal religious or intellectual commitment. Of these Henry Corbin is probably the most prominent (although, at the same time, unique) representative. His life-long fascination with Sufi/Shi'i esotericism and his profound impact

[162] See, e. g., *Ritter H.* The Ocean of the Soul: Men, the World and God in the Stories of Farid al-Din 'Attar. Trans. by John O'Kane with editorial assistance of Bernd Radtke. Leiden, 2003; *Meier F.* The Cleanest about Predestination: A Bit of Ibn Taymiyya // Essays on Islamic Piety and Mysticism. Trans. by John O'Kane with editorial assistance of Bernd Radtke. Leiden, 1999. P. 309–334.

[163] See, however, *Ernst.* The Shambala Guide. P. 8–26, 147–149, etc.

[164] Radtke's strenuous effort to propagate the intellectual legacy of his German-speaking intellectual forebears among the Anglophone audience is an eloquent example of his allegiance to an "intellectual dynasty".

[165] One should, however, point out that many scholars in North America owe a great intellectual debt to Arberry's work.

[166] On Corbin's intellectual debt to Massignon see *van den Bos M.* Mystical Regimes: Sufism and the State in Iran from the Qajar Era to the Islamic Republic. Leiden, 2002. P. 33–39.

on the study of Sufism in twentieth-century Iran have been examined in detail in half a dozen monographs,[167] which absolves me of the necessity to detail these issues here.[168] The same applies to the so-called "Traditionalist" school, which was discussed in an illuminating review article by Carl Ernst.[169]

8. Some Major Themes and Research Foci

Over the past four decades many of the major issues of Sufi studies outlined above continued to attract the attention of Western Islamicists. Thus, Massignon's "Qur'anic theory" was elaborated and fine-tuned by the Francophone Catholic monk Paul Nwyia, who undertook a thorough examination of the early Sufi exegetical tradition. Like Henry Corbin, who emphasized the "common roots" of Islamic esotericism,[170] Nwyia, too, traced Sufi esotericism back to the mystically-minded intellectual entourage of the sixth Shi'ite *imam* Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 148/765).[171] To this end, he examined the allegorical commentaries on the Qur'an attributed to the *imam* with a view to demonstrating their affinity with the exegetical methods of some early Sufi masters (such as Dhu 'l-Nun, Shaqiq al-Balkhi, and Sahl al-Tustari). While Nwyia's thesis sounds quite plausible and the texts that he furnished in support of it are convincing enough, it is not without a flaw. The problem is that Nwyia's textual evidence was collected by the seminal Sufi writer al-Sulami (d. 412/1021) in his famous exegetical compendium entitled *Haqa'iq al-tafsir*.[172] However, given al-Sulami's pronounced pro-Sufi apologetic agenda and the fact that his attributions of exegetical dicta may have been dictated by it, it is far from obvious that Ja'far al-Sadiq was indeed the real author of the exegetical dicta ascribed to him. At the same time, the line of inquiry proposed by Nwyia is promising due to the centrality of Qur'anic exegesis to the Sufi world-view. Even more importantly, he should be given credit for his invaluable contribution to the study of the formation of Sufi technical terminology,[173] which played a critical role in the emergence of Sufism as an independent and "free-standing" spiritual discipline and a distinctive life-style.[174] Following in the footsteps of Nwyia, the German-American scholar Gerhard Böwering produced an excellent study of the life and work of one of the pillars of early Sufi exegesis, Sahl al-Tustari (d. 283/896), which remains unsurpassed in its depth and erudition. While Böwering agreed with Nwyia's opinion regarding some striking similarities between Sufi exegetical methods and those current in the Christian Patristic tradition,[175] unlike his predecessor he was reluctant to see it as Sufism's principal source of inspiration. The presence of putative "external influences" in Sufi exegetical lore should not, in his view, be construed as evidence of a lack of creativity or slavish dependence on its Christian precursor. Böwering's superb analysis of the formation of elu-

[167] See, e. g., *Scarcia G.* Iran ed eresia musulmana nel pesno del Corbin // Studi e materiali di storia della religione. Napoli, 29 (1958). P. 113–127; *Adams Ch. J.* The Hermeneutics of Henry Corbin // Approaches to the Study of Islam in Religious Studies. Ed. by Richard Martin. Tucson, 1985. P. 129–150.; *van den Bos*. Mystic Regimes. P. 31–44.

[168] Some of his ideas will be discussed briefly in the following section.

[169] *Ernst*. Traditionalism.

[170] According to Corbin, the Muslim esoteric tradition consisted of Sufism, Shi'ism, and Isma'ilism. He tended to minimize differences among these three traditions, emphasizing instead their common fascination with the hidden, interior aspects of the Islamic revelation; see *Corbin H.* Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi. Trans. by Ralph Manheim. Princeton, 1969 and *Corbin H.* En Islam iranien, aspects spirituels et philosophiques. 4 vols. P., 1971–1972.

[171] *Nwyia*. Le tafsir.

[172] Its abbreviated version was edited and studied by Gerhard Böwering (Minor Qur'an Commentary of Abu 'Abd al-Rahman ... al-Sulami (d. 412/1021). Beirut, 1995), who is now working on a critical edition of its longer variant.

[173] Inspired by Massignon's "Qur'anic theory".

[174] See *Nwyia*. Exégèse coranique and *idem*. Trois œuvres inédites de mystiques musulmans. Beirut, 1986.

[175] *Böwering*. The Mystical Vision of Existence. P. 135–142.

sive mystical associations and themes in the mind of the Muslim exegete shows the latter to be by no means less imaginative or creative than his Christian counterpart. So, was there any causal relation between the two exegetical traditions? Böwering refrained from addressing this question.

The studies of Nwyia and Böwering contributed, perhaps against their will, to the old debate over the role of "foreign influences" in the shaping of Sufi theories and practices. This issue resurfaces once again in Bernd Radtke's critical examination of the intellectual universe of the early Sufi thinkers Dhu 'l-Nun al-Misri (d. 245/860) and al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi (d. ca 318/930), who are routinely seen by Islamicists as typical exponents of "Gnostic" and "Neo-Platonic" ideas. According to Radtke, the situation is much more complex, and the direct influence of non-Islamic systems on these and other early Sufi masters should not be automatically taken for granted. Radtke showed that both Dhu 'l-Nun and al-Tirmidhi were, in fact, conventional Muslim thinkers, whose anthropological, epistemological and cosmological views were quite in line with those of their peers.[176] The fact that certain "foreign" ideas were intricately interwoven into their intellectual universe does not necessarily imply that it was decisively shaped by Greek or Hellenistic ideas. In and of itself, their *Gedankenwelt* remained thoroughly and distinctively Islamic. Therefore, to view Sufism as a simple passive conduit to Islam of unprocessed "foreign" influences is a gross oversimplification.

A quite different view of Massignon's "Qur'anic theory" was taken by the French scholar Marjan Molé, who was a member of the Dominican monastic order. While he agreed with Massignon that some pious Muslims may have developed their mystical ideas through a strenuous meditation on the Qur'anic revelation with a view to grasping its hidden implications for their personal devotional life and in an effort to imitate the frugal and meditative lifestyle of the Prophet,[177] he insisted that the emergence of ascetic and mystical tendencies within early Islam could not be adequately explained without reference to the doctrines and practices of the numerous Christian monastic communities of the early medieval Middle East. Monastic life and values were ubiquitous in Iraq, Egypt and Syria, where Christian monks rubbed shoulders with early Muslims, including those who by virtue of their personal temperament were predisposed to ascetic and contemplative life. Some of these Muslims, according to Molé, did not remain immune to the allure of monastic ideals and practices, such as those of the Messalians, whose doctrine of the concealment of virtuous acts (*shituta*) may have contributed to the emergence of the Muslim "people of blame" (*al-malamatiyya*)[178]—those forerunners of the Sufis proper. At the same time, Molé denied any "Eastern" influences on Sufi theories and practices, especially those of Buddhism and Hinduism. Following Arberry, he vigorously rejected any Vedantic elements in the teaching of Abu Yazid al-Bistami, arguing that their putative presence in his statements was based on an extremely slim historical evidence and thus simply impossible to ascertain.[179]

A diametrically opposite view of Sufism's origins was advanced by the famous British expert on Indic religions Robert Charles Zaehner (1913–1974). Zaehner's argumentation rests on the already familiar notion that Sufism is in and of itself "incompatible" with "orthodox" Islam and thus constitutes, in a sense, an "independent religion".[180] Its "foreignness" vis-à-vis "orthodox" Islam, in Zaehner's view, is best attested by the teachings of Abu Yazid

[176] *Radtke B.* Al-Hakim al-Tirmidi: Ein islamischer Theosoph des 3./9. Jahrhunderts. Freiburg, 1980; *idem.* Theologen und Mystiker in Hurasan und Transoxanien // Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 136, 2 (1986). P. 536–569; *idem.* Theosophie (Hikma) and Philosophie (Falsafa): Ein Beitrag zur Frage der hikmat al-mašriq/al-išraq // Asiatische Studien, 42, 2 (1988). P. 156–174.

[177] *Molé M.* Les mystiques musulmans. P., 1965. P. 4–5.

[178] Ibid. P. 9–12 and 18–22; for the *malamatiyya* see my Islamic Mysticism. P. 94–99.

[179] Ibid. P. 7–8; cf. *Arberry A.J.* Revelation and Reason in Islam. N. Y.–L., 1957. P. 91–93.

[180] *Zaehner R.* Hindu and Muslim Mysticism. L., 1960. P. 3.

al-Bistami, who inherited his "pantheistic ideas" from a certain Abu 'Ali al-Sindi (of Sind?), whom Zaehner considered to be a Hindu convert to Islam.[181] According to Zaehner, al-Bistami's adoption of al-Sindi's "Hinduist" world-view marked a critical turning point in the evolution of Sufism from its monotheistic origins to an outright "pantheism" of Vedantic inspiration. Zaehner's theory was greeted with skepticism: apart from the encounter between al-Bistami and al-Sindi,[182] there was no historical or textual evidence to construe al-Bistami as a proponent of Hindu-style "pantheism".[183] As Zaehner's critics pointed out, al-Bistami's monistic statements could have as well been derived from the Qur'an and the Sunna.[184] This is not to say that there was no interaction and cross-pollination between Sufism and the Indian religious traditions. However, such mutually enriching contacts took place much later, after the Muslim conquest of India[185] and were much more complex than Zaehner's argument suggests.

With the rise of Turkish nationalist ideology in the late nineteenth century, some Turkish academics came to argue that Sufism found a particularly fertile and receptive environment among Turkic speaking populations, who were somehow "naturally predisposed" to mystical world-view[186] and especially to the monistic doctrines of Ibn [al-]'Arabi and his followers.[187] Attempts were made to trace the origin of some Sufi concepts to ancient Turkic epos and mythology[188] and even to derive the very word "Sufism" (*tasawwuf*) from the Turkic word for "water" (*suv*).[189]

The "Iranian theory" of Sufism's origin found its most eloquent exponent in the great French scholar Henry Corbin, who was prone to trace the roots of Sufi esotericism back to the early Shi'ite esoteric milieu.[190] Corbin's entire academic career was devoted to proving the underlying affinity between these two strains of Islamic "esotericism" with special reference to the role of Persian thinkers in bringing Islamic mysticism (both Sunni and Shi'i) to fruition. In Corbin's opinion, Sufism acquired its final shape and reached its full potential only after it had taken root among the Persians. According to Corbin, even though Sufism's most consequential exponent, Ibn [al-]'Arabi came from Islamic Spain, his eventual relocation from the Muslim West to the Muslim East symbolized the all-important shift of the center of Islamic mystical and philosophical thought—which Corbin regarded as the pinnacle of intellectual and spiritual life in Islam—to Persia and the Persian-speaking parts of the Muslim world. Corbin did not view the relationships between Shi'ism and Sufism as a unidirectional process. At the early stages of its development Sufism benefited from Shi'ite esoteric ideas (such as, for example, the notion of divinely bestowed authority or "saint-hood"—*wilaya/walaya*). However, as time went on, the Shi'ite tradition became "fossilized" and "dogmatized" only to be revitalized by the creative spiritual energies emanating from Sufism.[191] In general, according to Corbin, the esoteric tendencies of Sufism and Shi'ism,

[181] Ibid. P. 108–109.

[182] Arberry was of the opinion that his *nisba* was derived from the name of a village in the vicinity of Bistam rather than from that of the Indian province, see *Arberry*. Revelation and Reason. P. 90.

[183] See, e. g., *Hodgson*. The Venture, vol. 1, P. 405 and *Schimmel*. Mystical Dimensions. P. 11.

[184] See my Islamic Mysticism. P. 69–72.

[185] *Hodgson*. The Venture, vol. 2, P. 455–467; *Rizvi S.A.* History of Sufism in India. 2 vols. New Delhi, 1978, *passim*.

[186] *Schimmel*. Mystical Dimensions. P. 11; *Tadjikova* (*Tadzhikova*) *K.* Osobennosti sufizma v sredenvekovom Kazakhstane // Izvestiia Akademii nauk KazSSR, 2 (1978). P. 57–62.

[187] *Ülken H.* L'école wudjudite et son influence sur la pensée torque // Wiener Zeitschrift für Kunde des Morgenlandes, 62 (1969). P. 193–208.

[188] *Basilov V.* Kul't sviatykh v islame. M., 1970.

[189] Due to the Sufi "obsession" with purification, see *Aliev A.* Zametki o sufiiskom ordene sukhravardiia // Islam v istorii narodov Vostoka. M., 1981. P. 154–159.

[190] *Corbin H.* Histoire de la philosophie islamique. P., 1964, vol. 1. P. 263–265 and *idem*. En Islam iranien, *passim*.

[191] *Corbin*. Histoire, vol. 1. P. 264–265.

which had reached their apogee in late medieval and early modern Persian society, came to serve as effective safeguards against the "barren literalism" and "pettifogging mentality" of "official" Sunnism and Shi'ism.

Corbin's "Iranian" thesis appealed to many nationalist Iranian intellectuals, such as Seyyed Hosain Nasr and 'Abd al-Husayn Zarrinkoob (Zarrinkub), both of whom considered Sufism to be too great an achievement to be shared with any other Muslim nations. Hence their notion of Iran as the cradle and wet nurse of early Islamic mysticism.[192] While at the beginning, many Sufi ideas and practices were borrowed, at least in part, from Christian and Buddhist monks,[193] Sufism's later development, according to Nasr, was shaped almost exclusively by Persians, either Shi'ites or Sunnites with strong pro-'Alid propensities. The affinity between the "Iranian/Persian spirit" and mystical world-view is best attested by the unprecedented flowering of Sufi poetry in the Persian language.[194]

To sum up, in the second half of the twentieth century, the issue of "Sufism's roots and origins" continued to dominate its discussions in Western academic literature. As we have seen, practically every scholar mentioned above considered it his duty to discuss, at least briefly, the origins of Islamic mysticism in the tradition he/she was best familiar with or had personal commitment to: for a scholar of Iran, Sufism was a natural product of the Iranian/Persian "spirit"; for an Indologist it was a Muslim appropriation of Indian religious and philosophical systems; a Turkologist was eager to demonstrate Sufism's underlying affinity with the "mystical mind-set" or "Shamanistic practices" of the Turkic peoples, etc. Yet, the majority of Western scholars continued to view Sufism as a Muslim variant of the Christian monastic tradition, which, in its turn, had grown out of late Hellenistic wisdom, primarily Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism.[195] This is hardly surprising given the scholars', for the most part, Christian upbringing[196] and their Christian audience, whose expectations and interests they had to take into account. This situation is finely captured by the following statement of Carl Ernst:

> This approach, which consistently misinterpreted the lasting power of the spiritual irruption that took place through Muhammad, saw Sufism as an exotic foreign growth incompletely grafted onto the stock of intolerant and rigid Semitic monotheism... [It] reflects the persistence in Europe of medieval anti-Islamic biases, racial prejudices, and the positivistic ideologies of the day.[197]

While one can agree with Ernst's harsh judgment in principle, it is impossible to deny that the problem of "Sufism's origins" has, to some extent, served as a stimulus for Western scholars to consider Islamic mysticism in a comparative perspective, thereby preventing them from secluding themselves within their narrowly defined confines of their academic specializations. For some reason, such comparative musings rarely, if ever, address the issue of what one should consider to be "external influence", especially, to what extent our understanding of "Arabian Islam" can be used as a yardstick to determine what we should regard as being "Islamic" or "un/non-Islamic". This problem was, to my knowledge, first raised by the outstanding American scholar Marshall Hodgson, who pointed out the inadequacy of treating the "Arabian" intellectual and cultural environment of primeval Islam as the only Islamically "authentic" one, while labeling all "non-Arab" elements of the buoyant Islamic tradition as

[192] *Zarrinkoob*. Persian Sufism. P. 182–184 *et passim*; cf. *Nasr S.H.* The Rise and Development of Persian Sufism // *Lewisohn L.* (ed.). Classical Persian Sufism: From its origins to Rumi, *passim*; *Damghani A.* Persian Contributions to Sufi Literature in Arabic // *Lewisohn L.* (ed.). Classical Persian Sufism: from its origins to Rumi. P. 33–58, *passim*; and other articles in *Lewisohn* (ed.). Classical Persian Sufism.

[193] *Zarrinkoob*. Persian Sufism. P. 139 and 147.

[194] Ibid. P. 168.

[195] For a recent example, see the first chapters of *Baldick J.* Mystical Islam: An Introduction to Sufism. L., 1989.

[196] Some of the scholars we have discussed were formally trained Christian theologians and clergymen.

[197] *Ernst C.W.* Words of Ecstasy in Sufism. Albany, NY, 1985. P. 2.

"foreign importations" and "borrowings".[198] One can push Hodgson's thesis even further and argue that the "Arabocentric" perspective is both static and a-historical as it treats the "Arabian" or "Qur'anic" Islam as a self-sufficient and unchangeable entity, a "thing in itself" that somehow remained immune to the constant re-interpretations and re-assessment of its adherents, who came from a wide variety of educational, ethnic, cultural and social backgrounds.

Another major issue debated in Western scholarship on Sufism in the second half of the twentieth century was that of Sufism's purported "blossom" and "decline". According to many Western writers, the seventh/thirteenth century represented "the climax of Sufi achievement", whereupon Sufism entered the period of a protracted "decay" that has continued unabated throughout the rest of Islamic history and down to the present day.[199] This "decay" allegedly found its expression in the growing indifference of individual Sufis to generating "new" knowledge and creatively reinterpreting the Sufi legacy; in the widespread and ostentatious foregoing of Islam's ritual obligations by Sufi masters; in the Sufi fascination (verging on obsession) with "cabbalism" and "witchcraft"; and, finally, in the encouragement of popular saint cults and other "vulgar superstitions" by Sufi brotherhoods.[200]

It should be pointed out that the Western notion of the purported "decline" and "degeneration" of later Sufism was informed, in large part, by the constant complaints of medieval and modern Sufi writers about the dramatic "debasement" of the originally high standards of Sufi piety at the hands of their contemporaries.[201] In addition, Western advocates of the "decline thesis" may have been influenced by the Muslim "modernists" and "reformers" of the early twentieth century, who considered Sufism to be a major cause of the intellectual and spiritual "paralysis" that has afflicted the world of Islam over the past several centuries.[202] Those Western scholars who postulated Sufism's alleged "degeneration" were blinkered by the old Orientalist fixation on the "golden age" of Islam, which, in their mind, came to an abrupt end around the sixth/eleventh century, whereupon Islamic civilization sank into a protracted intellectual and cultural "stupor".[203] Finally, the notion of "decline" and "decadence" of later Sufism is, to some extent, a result of the nineteenth-century Orientalist fixation on texts, which oftentimes compelled their twentieth-century successors to privilege the earliest of them as "original" and "authoritative", while dismissing all later literary production—in this case, the Sufi literature of the "post-classical period"—as "secondary", "unoriginal" and "epigonic". This obsession with the "originality" of the written word rendered many Western academics of the second half of the twentieth century oblivious of Sufism's political, economic and social functions, which are not explicitly addressed in Sufi normative literature, but which are certainly no less important in evaluating its vitality.

In sum, the problem of Sufism's "decline" is much more complicated than it appears at first sight. First, the notion of "decline", while convenient, is often taken to apply to all aspects of a given phenomenon (in this case, Sufism), which is rarely, if ever, the case in real life.[204] Nor is

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[198] *Hodgson*. The Venture, vol. 1. P. 41–43.

[199] See, e. g., *Arberry A.J.* Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam. L., 1950. P. 119–123; cf. *von Grunebaum G.* Classical Islam: A History 600–1258. Trans. by Kathrine Watson. Chicago, 1970, the last chapter of which is tellingly titled "Withdrawal and Mysticism at the End of the Caliphate" (P. 191–201), implying that Sufism was somehow linked to the purported "decline" of Islam in the post-Caliphal period; cf. *Sourdel D.* Medieval Islam. London–Boston, 1983, *passim.*

[200] *Arberry*. Sufism. P. 120–122.

[201] As noted by *Arberry*. Sufism. P. 121–122; cf. *Schimmel*. Mystical Dimensions. P. 20–22; *Meier F.* Khurasan and the End of Classical Sufism // Essays on Islamic Piety and Mysticism. P. 190–192 *et passim*; *Harris R.* (trans.). The Risalah: Principles of Sufism. Chicago, 2002. P. 16.

[202] *al-Wakil, 'A. al-R.* Hadhihi hiya al-sufiyya. Cairo, 1955; *Rahman F.* Islam. L., 1966. P. 146; *Mubarak Z.* Al-Tasawwuf al-islami fi 'l-adab wa 'l-akhlaq. Beirut, 1975, vol. 1. P. 136, etc.

[203] As reflected in the titles of some influential studies of "classical Islam" such as *Richards D.S.* (ed.). Islamic Civilization, 950–1150: A colloquium published under the auspices of the Near Eastern History Group, The University of Pennsylvania. L., 1973 and *von Grunebaum*. Classical Islam: A History 600–1258.

[204] *Hodgson*. The Venture, vol. 2. P. 455–456.

it ubiquitous, as a perceived or real "decline" in intellectual creativity and originality in, say, Egypt was counterbalanced by a vigorous "Sufi renaissance" in the Indonesian Archipelago, where Sufism thrived during what was considered by scholars like Arberry to be the "dark ages" of Sufism (from the tenth/sixteenth century onward).[205] Even in its original environment, namely sixteenth-century Egypt, amidst its alleged "death-throes", Sufism, in Arberry's own words, "gave birth to a man of no small genius" named 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha'rani (d. 973/1565).[206] Such "geniuses" abound in that and the subsequent centuries throughout the Muslim world: Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1034/1624), Dara Shikoh (d. 1069–1070/1659), Shah Wali Allah (d. 1176/1762), Mir Dard (d. 1199/1785) in India; al-Jazuli (d. 869/1465), Ibn Zarruq (d. 899/1493), Ibn 'Ajiba (d. 1224/1809), al-Darqawi (d. 1239/1823), 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jaza'iri (d. 1300/1883) and Ahmad b. 'Aliwa (d. 1353/1934) in the Maghrib; Shamil (d. 1287/1871) in the Caucasus; al-Hajj 'Umar (d. 1280/1864), Muhammad b. 'Abdallah, the *mahdi* of the Sudan (d. 1302/1885), and Muhammad 'Abdallah Hassan (d. 1338/1920), Muhammad al-Sanusi (d. 1276/1859) in Africa; 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi (d. 1143/1731) in Syria/Palestine, and many others. These and many other Sufis were both outstanding scholars and talented political and military leaders, whose achievements are quite commensurate, if not greater, than those of their predecessors who lived during Sufism's "golden age". In the social and political domain, later Sufism made great strides by dramatically expanding its popularity among the Muslim masses from Central Asia to Africa. It did so by offering them a wide variety of intellectual and spiritual options and thereby accommodating a great number of potential followers from a humble villager to an urbane intellectual.[207] If worldly success is to be considered a criterion of vitality, then later Sufism no doubt was more vigorous than its "golden age" progenitor, which was confined to a relatively narrow circle of "spiritual athletes", who wielded very little real political, economic or social influence. The role of post-"golden-age" Sufism in disseminating Islam in the remote corners of the Muslim world among often hostile populations from China to Western Sahara should also not be forgotten.[208] On balance, the missionary activities of individual Sufis or Sufi brotherhoods in the later periods were quite successful, which one can hardly expect of a "moribund" movement posited in many Western studies of later Sufism.

A few other problems that were being debated by Western scholars of Sufism in the second half of the twentieth century deserve at least a brief mention. One is the relation between Sufism and its institutions and the so-called "orthodox" or "official" Islam. This problem springs in part from the long-standing Orientalist perception of Sufism as intrinsically "alien" to "mainstream" Islam, whatever this term is supposed to mean, and, as such, "suspicious", if not outright "heretical", in the eyes of its learned custodians.[209] However, in reality, we find no "pure jurists" or "pure theologians" locked in an uncompromising struggle with "heretical" Sufis. Rather, many Muslim scholars wore all these three hats (or turbans) simultaneously as it were, so we are usually dealing with politics and factional infighting within the Muslim scholarly community, in which Sufism was just one element out of the many.[210] Even such vocal critics of Sufism as Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 597/1201), Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328)[211] and Ibn Khaldun (d. 809/

[205] See my Islamic Mysticism. P. 286–288.

[206] *Arberry*. Sufism. P. 123.

[207] See my Ibn 'Arabi. P. 49–58.

[208] See, e. g., *Meier F.* Soufisme et déclin culturel dans l'histoire de l'Islam // Actes du Symposium organisé par R. Brunschvig et G.E. von Grunebaum avec le concours de A. Abel [et al.] Sous les auspices des universités de Bordeaux et de Chicago. P., 1957. P. 232; cf. *Eaton R.* The Sufis 1300–1700: Social Roles of Sufis in Medieval India. Princeton, 1977, *passim* and *Fletcher J.* Studies on Chinese and Islamic Inner Asia. Aldershot, 1995.

[209] For a recent articulation of this view see *Baldick*. Mystical Islam. P. 2–5 and 15–24.

[210] For details see my Ibn 'Arabi. P. 273–275.

[211] See, e. g., *Makdisi G.* The Hanbali School and Sufism // Humaniora Islamica, 2 (1974). P. 61–72 and *idem.* Hanbalite Islam / M. Swartz (trans. and ed.). Studies on Islam. Oxf., 1981. P. 216–274; *Homerin E.Th.* Ibn

1406)[212] were not necessarily opposed to Sufism as such, only to certain manifestations of it which they considered "heretical" or detrimental to the community's well-being. This is not to say that there were no persecutions against individual Sufi masters or Sufi organizations on the part of certain scholarly factions or state authorities.[213] Such persecutions, however, were driven by such a wide variety of causes and circumstances as to make any generalizations regarding the purported conflict between Sufism and Islam tenuous at best.[214] Rather, one should probably speak about clashes of personalities, vested economic interests (e. g., control of pious endowments and sinecures), and rivalries between scholarly factions. Furthermore, in many respects Sufism had a much greater affinity with "traditionalist"/"orthodox" Sunni Islam than with Islamic rationalist theology and philosophy.[215] The same is true of the complex relations between Sufism and "mainstream" Shi'ism, which are characterized by the same ambiguity and have changed dramatically over time.[216]

The last two decades of the twentieth century witnessed the growing interest of Western scholars in the history of Sufi institutions, especially brotherhoods or orders.[217] Special collective monographs were dedicated to the Naqshbandiyya and the Bektashiyya and their evolution in various parts of the Muslim world from Africa to China.[218] Individual studies dedicated to one or the other brotherhood are too numerous to be listed here. Such studies are no longer carried out exclusively by historians and religious studies specialists, who rely primarily on written sources and archives. More and more scholars collect their data through field interviews of members of Sufi communities and employ methods and techniques current in social and cultural anthropology.[219] Anthropological studies of Sufism, however, are not without limitations in that even the best of them are "rarely very accurate or helpful in

Taimiyah's al-Sufiyah wa-l-fuqara' // Arabica, 32, 2 (1985). P. 219–244; *Meier F.* The Cleanest about Predestination: A Bit of Ibn Taymiyya // Essays on Islamic Piety and Mysticism. P. 309–334; see also contributions to *de Jong F., Radtke B.* (eds.). Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Confrontations and Polemic. Leiden, 1999.

[212] See my Ibn 'Arabi. P. 184–197.

[213] See ibid., *passim*; *Ernst.* Words of Ecstasy, *passim*; *Sirriyeh.* Sufis and Anti-Sufis.

[214] See, e. g., *Sirryieh.* Sufis and Anti-Sufis; *de Jong, Radtke* (eds.). Islamic Mysticism Contested, *passim*.

[215] See, e. g., *Cooperson M.* Ibn Hanbal and Bishr al-Hafi: A Case Study in Biographical Tradition // Studia Islamica, 86 (1997), *passim*; *Kinberg L.* What is Meant by *zuhd*? // Studia Islamica, 41 (1985). P. 24–44; *Melchert Ch.* The Hanabila and the Early Sufis // Arabica, 48 (2001), *passim*.

[216] See, e. g., *Molé M.* Les Kubrawiya entre sunnisme et chiisme au VIII-e et IX siècles de l'hégire // Revue des études islamiques, 29 (1961). P. 61–142; *Glassen E.* Die frühen Safawiden nach Qazi Ahmad Qumi. Freiburg, 1970; *Babayan K.* Mystics, Monarchs and Messiah: Cultural Landscape of Early Modern Iran. Cambridge Mass, 2002; *Bashir Sh.* Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions: The Nurbakhshiya between Medieval and Modern Islam. Colombia, SC, 2003.

[217] See, e. g., *Popovic A., Veinstein G.* (eds.). Les Voies d'Allah: les ordres mystiques dans l'islam dès origines à aujourd'hui. P., 1996.

[218] *Buehler A., Isin E., Zarcone T.* (eds.). The Qadiriyya (The inaugural issue of Journal of the History of Sufism). Paris–Istanbul, 2000; *Gaborieau M., Popovic A., Zarcone Th.* (eds.). Naqshbandis: cheminements et situation actuelle d'un ordre mystique musulman: actes de la Table ronde de Sèvre de 2–4 mai, 2–4 May 1985. Istanbul–Paris, 1990; *Özdalga E.* (ed.). Naqshbandis in Western and Central Asia: Change and Continuity. Papers read at a conference held at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, June 9–11, 1997. Richmond, Surrey, 1999; *Popovic A.* (ed.). Bektachiyya: Etudes sur l'ordre mystique des Bektachis et les groupes relevant de Hadji Bektach. Paris–Istanbul, 1995.

[219] See, e. g., *Gilsenan M.* Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt: An Essay in the Sociology of Religion. Oxf., 1973; *idem.* Trajectories of Contemporary Sufism // *Gellner E.* (ed.). Islamic Dilemmas: Reformers, Nationalists and Industrialization. B.–N. Y., 1985. P. 187–198; *Crapanzano.* The Hamadsha; *Geertz C.* Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia. New Haven, 1968; *Eickelman D.* Moroccan Islam: Tradition and Society in a Pilgrimage Center. Austin, TX, 1976; *Turner B.* Towards an Economic Model of Virtuoso Religion // *Ernst Gellner* (ed.). Islamic Dilemmas. P. 49–72; *O'Brien.* The Mourides; *idem.* Charisma and brotherhood in African Islam. Oxf., 1988; *Hoffman V.* Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt. Columbia, SC, 1995; *Hammoudi A.* Master and Disciple: The Cultural Foundations of Moroccan Authoritarianism. Chicago, 1997; *Waugh E.* The Munshidin of Egypt: Their World and Their Song. Columbia, SC, 1989; *Ewing.* Arguing Sainthood; *van den Bos.* Mystical Regimes, etc.

communicating the spiritual life and experience of the individuals [they] attempt to describe".[220] Yet, despite such limitations, these studies provide a valuable alternative to the entrenched Orientalist fixation on normative Sufi literature that dominated the field of Sufi studies throughout the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries.

9. Conclusions

As mentioned at the beginning of this survey, the study of Sufism in the West has come a long way since its inception in the early nineteenth century. Thanks to the efforts of several generations of European and American scholars (and, more recently, also of their Western trained colleagues in the Middle East and Asia) we now have a sufficiently comprehensive picture of the history and present-day condition of Sufi movements in the Maghrib, Egypt, Turkey, the Balkans, and India. At the same time, much less has been written about the vicissitudes of Sufism's evolution in Africa, Arabia, Central Asia, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Russia, the Caucasus, and China, although the academic coverage of these geographical areas has been steadily improving of late. As the study of Sufism increasingly becomes a "native" enterprise,[221] the Western paradigms and assumptions presented above are being put to the test by Middle Eastern and Islamic scholars and, occasionally, found wanting. However, their scholarship, in turn, is often informed by their commitment to their own religious and nationalist agendas, which oftentimes impel them to overemphasize the uniqueness of their "national" Sufi movements vis-a-vis those in the other parts of the Muslim world. In the end, there remains a critical and probably unbridgeable divide between those who approach Sufism from outside in an attempt to comprehend its social, political, economic, practical, and doctrinal dimensions and those who make a personal commitment to it and strive to live out its implications.

Резюме

А.Д. Кныш
Историография исследований по суфизму на Западе и в России

В данном очерке изложена история изучения суфизма (мусульманского мистицизма) на Западе и в России. Особое внимание уделено тому, как западноевропейские, американские и российские исследователи пытались объяснить возникновение и развитие этого сложного и многогранного течения в исламе. Их взгляды на суфизм формировались под воздействием общих представлений, которые имели хождение в Европе, США и России в XIX–XX вв., об исламе и его последователях, а также под влиянием расхожих интеллектуальных стереотипов, присущих той эпохе. В конечном счете, западные и российские ученые сумели воссоздать достаточно адекватную картину развития мусульманского мистицизма со времени его возникновения до наших дней. В то же время в их исследованиях остается немало пробелов, которые предстоит восполнить исламоведам XXI столетия.

[220] *Morris*. Situating Islamic 'Mysticism'. P. 320–321, note 16 and P. 319, note 14.

[221] *Eickelman D.* The Middle East and Central Asia: An Anthropological Approach. 3d ed., Upper Saddle River, NJ, 1998. P. 277.