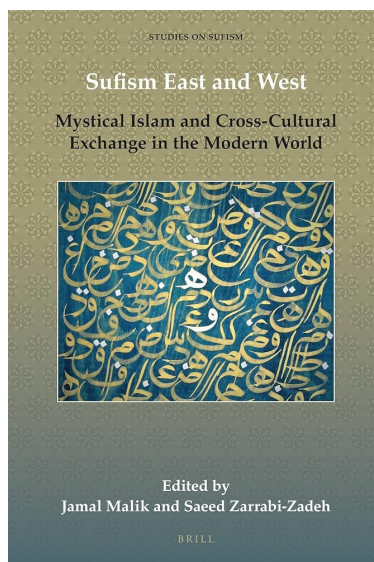




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- Contributors : Ali S. Asani, Rachida Chih, Marta Dominguez Diaz, Carl W. Ernst, Marcia Hermansen, Alexander Knysh, Bruce B. Lawrence, Jamal Malik, Catharina Raudvere, Mark Sedgwick, and Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh
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## Editors' Profile

Jamal **Malik** is a professor of Islamic studies at the University of Erfurt. He is a member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts (Vienna) and the Fellow Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland (UK). He focuses on Islam in South Asia and Muslims in Europe. He has published extensively on Islamic education, religious pluralism, Sufism, and religious mobilization. His last monograph is *Islam in South Asia* (Brill 2008 and Orient Blackswan 2012). Together with Itzhak Weismann (Haifa), he is co-editing *Politics of Da'wa: Islamic Preaching in the Modern World* (forthcoming).

Saeed **Zarrabi-Zadeh** is an assistant professor of Islamic studies at the University of Erfurt, Germany. His research interests include Sufism (in both medieval and modern times), mysticism and modernity, comparative mysticism, and Persian literature. He received his BSc in Industrial Engineering from Sharif University of Technology (Iran), MA in Islamic Mysticism (Iran), and PhD in Religious Studies from the University of Erfurt (Germany, funded by DAAD). His publications include *Practical Mysticism in Islam and Christianity: A Comparative Study of Jalal alDin Rumi and Meister Eckhart* (Routledge, 2016) and *Sufism in Western Contexts* (co-editor with Marcia Hermansen, Brill, forthcoming).

## Book's Content

What is Sufism? In simple terms, Sufism is a moral-spiritual aspect of Islamic teachings. When we attempt to define it, we encounter a scientific discourse about the 'deepest secret', which is significantly more intricate than we initially thought. Therefore, readers should independently investigate and draw their conclusions, which may include a comprehensive exploration of the book under review. Sufism, as a practice, teaches us how to feel the deepest secret intimately and substantially. Of course, capturing the breadth and abstractness of this experience in an instant definition anchor will be challenging, particularly when this mystical experience manifests in or intersects with Sufis' moral choices in the social, political, economic, and cultural realms. Bruce B. Lawrence, at the end of this book, compares Sufism to an elephant in a dark room. Anyone who tries to guess it—with a particular approach, methodology, and scientific perspective—is not uncovering the whole thing, but only groping for partial reality as it appears in the gaps of his perception.

This book, a collection of writings from 10 prolific authors, has a meaningful common thread in its attempt to capture the sparks of Sufism. Overall, accompanied by various perspectives and points of emphasis in each chapter, this book illustrates the universality and eternity of Sufi teachings. If we consider Sufism as a representation of virtue, then the Qur'an has taught that virtue (*al-birr*) "will not be obtained by seeking it in the West or the East" because the demands of doing virtue are not limited by space and time. Wherever and whenever, anyone can do good, be him or her a Westerner or an Easterner. This is also applicable to Sufism. Despite its origin in the Eastern world (along with the birth of Islam), the teachings of Sufism are universal and eternal, as is the message of Islam in general. In the introduction, Jamal Malik and Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh describe Sufism as a sound or voice emitted into the resonance space of the East and West. As it spreads, it undergoes various forms of reflection, refraction, and distortion, enabling its reach to surpass spatial and temporal boundaries. However, its appearance and packaging may vary according to differences in personal Sufi spirituality, socio-cultural context, and the dynamics of life. The resonance of Sufism throughout the world, along with the multiplicity of its understanding and manifestations—as practiced by Sufis—has encouraged the curiosity of Western academics in the modern era to research it. Many of them later became its practitioners, such as G.I. Gurdjieff (d. 1949), René Guenon (d. 1951), Annemarie Schimmel (d. 2003), and others. Regardless of the various motives behind it, their studies have created a corpus of scholarship that has become an entry point for the field of Sufism studies, which currently appears increasingly lively. The growing number of conferences and journals on the subject, along with the strengthening and reciprocal approach of various social-humanities disciplines, reflect this fact. The editors, Jamal Malik and Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh, humbly acknowledge that they compiled the book *Sufism East and West* as a microcosm of the Sufism sound landscape, which encompasses more than just the West and the East.

This book is divided into three clusters to realize the compact form of Sufi discourse. The first cluster, "The Construction and Reorientation of Sufism in the Modern World," focuses on the redefinition of Sufism in the Western world and its reformulation in the Eastern world, driven by self-criticism or anti-Sufi criticism, both from orientalist and puritan Wahabis. The second cluster, "Interactions between Sufism and Western Culture," delves into the intricate interplay between Sufism and Western culture, ultimately leading to the 'Easternization' of Western spirituality. This section examines Sufism's influence and stimulation on Western culture, as well as how the new environment echoes Sufism itself. Meanwhile, the last cluster, "Sufism and the Representation of Islam," discusses the transformation process of Sufism in the West and the East. In this process, Sufism has played an important role in presenting a distinctive face of Islam that is different from both fundamentalist and political Islam.

The first section presents four essays; two of them deal with the redefinition of Sufism in the West, and the other two deal with the reformulation of Sufism in the East as a response to the demands of modernity, or as an 'internal reformation' of Sufism itself. Carl W. Ernst writes "The Dabistan and Orientalist Views of Sufism." This essay aims to examine the views of an early English orientalist,

William Jones (d. 1794), on the nature of Sufism based on the *Dabistan-i Mazahib*, a classic Persian work. Ernst argues that according to Jones' reading, Sufism does not originate from Islam but is "a universal mysticism ... linked to Hinduism and expressed in Neoplatonic terms." In the same section, Alexander Knysh writes, "Definitions of Sufism as a Meeting Place of Eastern and Western Creative Imaginations." In contrast to the first essay, Knysh argues that Sufism does not originate from the East or the West. Knysh concludes that various intellectual and ideological agendas shaped and readjusted Sufism, beginning with the practice of 'living Sufism' in the context of life. Next, Jamal Malik writes "Sufi Amnesia in Sayyid Ahmad Khan's *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*." In this essay, Malik highlights how Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898), one of the modern Islamic reformers, used his Sufi background to develop the idea of pragmatic modernism, both secular and religious. Finally, Rachida Chih writes, "Discussing the Sufism of the Early Modern Period: A New Historiographical Outlook on the Tariqa Muhammadiyya." Her main idea is that loyalty to the Prophetic tradition in Sufism is not the result of modern-era Sufism reform but rather emerged from the Sufi milieu itself since pre-modern times, as shown by Ahmad al-Qushashi (d. 1661), a prominent figure of the Khalwatiyya order in the seventeenth century. Therefore, the concept of neo-Sufism, known for its strong adherence to Sharia, represents a continuation of the traditional teachings of the Sufis, not the introduction of new ones.

The second part consists of three essays that describe the influence of Sufism on Western culture and the dynamic and complex interaction between the two. Mark Sedgwick writes, "Sufism and the Gurdjieff Movement: Multiple Itineraries of Interaction." Studying the case of the movement of G.I. Gurdjieff (1866–1949), a Greek Armenian Sufi teacher, Sedgwick emphasizes that the appeal of Sufism in the context of the modern West can fade and decline. He asserts that not only did the individual biographies of its "successors" contribute to this decline, but the growing conflict between the West and the Muslim world also played a role. In contrast to this narrative, Marcia Hermansen, in her essay "Beyond West Meets East: Space and Simultaneity in Post-Millennial Western Sufi Autobiographical Writings," shows the practice of Sufism as a universal value that transcends the boundaries of East and West. After reading the autobiographies of four 21st-century Western Sufis, Hermansen argues that their mystical experiences show Sufism as an East/West meeting point that makes it "such a fecund arena for syncretic, creative, and novel expressions of creative and religious impulses." Finally, Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh wrote "Sufism in the Modern West: A Taxonomy of Typologies and the Category of Dynamic Integrejectionism." Zarrabi-Zadeh portrays the relationship between Sufism and modernity as dynamic; some Sufi movements adapt to its demands (integrationist), while others close themselves off and reject it (rejectionist). Thus, the engagement of Sufis with modernity includes harmony and conflict, thus forming "a gray complex rather than delimited, black-and-white entities." This relationship is later described by Zarrabi-Zadeh as 'integrejectionism'.

The last cluster contains three writings that depict Sufism's transformation and can present an adaptive, tolerant, and culturally friendly nuance of Islam. Marta Domingues Diaz wrote "Between Two or Three Worlds: Reversion to Islam, Beur Culture, and Western Sufism in the Tariqa Budhishiyya." In this writing, Diaz offers an ethnographic survey of a group of female Sufi immigrants in Europe who are affiliated with the Budhishiyya order based in Morocco. As a result, Dias shows that by becoming members of this order, they can bridge the lifestyle of the past Moroccan socio-cultural environment with the secular perspective adopted by most European societies. Meanwhile, Catharina Raudvere wrote "Between Religiosity, Cultural Heritage, and Politics: Sufi-Oriented Interests in Contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina." By examining three different Sufi groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Raudvere shows that Sufi orders that form social, cultural, and economic networks across urban and rural areas demonstrate adaptability within traditionalism. Despite Puritan and liberal criticisms of it, Sufism has played a role as a marker of intellectual alliance in the debate about Islam's authority and the authenticity of local ritual practices related to Sufi orders. Finally, Ali S. Asani, through his writing "Transmitting and Transforming Traditions: Salman Ahmad and Sufi Rock," shows the embodiment of Sufism in rock music as displayed by Salman Ahmad, a guitarist and vocalist of the band Junoon in Pakistan. In Asani's

analysis, Junoon represents a friendly and tolerant Islam, which the West then uses to fight against anti-Western jihadist ideology. Despite using his music to challenge Pakistan's political and religious hegemony, Salman Ahmad has faced criticism and accusations of being a tool of Western politics that oppresses Muslims.

## Conclusion

Bruce B. Lawrence provides an afterword at the end of the book, critically reviewing and narrating the ten writings as a variety of minute perceptions of Sufism's nature, which is far deeper and larger. Related to this, Lawrence asserts that "Sufism persists beyond all the literary conventions or analytical approaches devised to capture it." Moreover, Sufism is not merely a scientific discourse. The study of Sufism, which constitutes a 'macrocosmic construction' reflected in the 'fragments' of this book, is mainly concerned with studying the phenomenon of Sufism as believed and practiced by its adherents in the profane space of life. In the meantime, Sufism essentially teaches how to feel the "secret" in every breath, which can sink self-awareness into God's oneness. This 'secret' is universal and eternal, so it spreads to the practice of Sufism as its shell, which always resonates in every era, beyond the space of the East and the West. As long as they see Sufism as an object of scientific-positivistic research, the writings of academics only guess at its external appearances, not revealing the secrets behind it. The Sufi tradition famously states that the individual who comprehends the sweetness of Sufism is the one who has personally experienced it.

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