

*Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*, ed. Richard Martin (Macmillan Reference U.S.A., forthcoming):

**Tariqa**, an Arabic term for the spiritual path, especially in the sense of a method of spiritual practice, often embodied in a social organization and tradition known as a Sufi order.

Tariqa has the etymological sense of way or path, and along with its near twin tariq, it is used as a generic term for the way or path to God in the mystical writings of the Sufis (see tasawwuf). Despite the existence of numerous different traditions of Sufi practice and organization, it is common for Sufi teachers to point out that there is only one spiritual path that encompasses all of these different variations. At the same time, it is frequently asserted that there are as many paths to God as there are human souls. It is difficult to translate this kind of spiritual ideal into any definitive enumeration of Sufi orders as sociological entities.

The early Sufi movement as it developed in the first centuries of the Muslim era was characterized by informal association of like-minded individuals. But as Sufi communities gradually coalesced, Sufi leaders increasingly were associated with residential hospices (Arabic ribat or zawiya, Persian khanqah), an institution first developed in Iran by a puritanical religious movement known as the Karramiyya. The followers of Abu Ishaq al-Kazaruni (d. 1033) established their own hospices in southern Persia and in coastal trading towns of the Indian Ocean. Abu Sa'id ibn Abu al-Khayr (d. 1049) established a center for Sufis in eastern Iran, with codes of conduct for the guidance of novices. Newly arrived Muslim rulers such as the Seljuk Turks found it attractive to sponsor the construction and upkeep of such hospices, along with academies (madrasas) for the teaching of the Islamic religious sciences. These hospices typically were places dedicated to prayer, study of the

Qur'an, meditation, and communal meals, where travelers and the needy were welcome. Sufi masters would impart instruction and advice to their students and to visitors.

Some hospices like the Sa'īd al-Su'ada' in Cairo (founded by Saladin in 1173) depended entirely on royal patronage. Other hospices had a broad clientele among the artisan classes, from which many of the Sufi masters came. The hospice of Ruzbihan Baqli (d. 1209) was built in Shiraz in 1165 by stonemasons among his followers. Yet the need of political leaders for religious legitimation put pressure on the new Sufi institutions to become part of the state patronage apparatus, typically through accepting endowment with land-tax income. Thus by 1281, the Mongol rulers of Iran set up an endowment for the previously independent hospice established by Ruzbihan, in this way linking its fortunes with the state. In India, the residences of Sufi masters of the Chishti order were typically one large room where everyone lived and pursued their discipline, unlike the multiple private cells of hospices in Syria and Iran. These "meeting houses" (jama'at khanas) tended to be supported, at least initially, by voluntary donations rather than fixed land income. In Turkey the hospices were known as tekkes. Because of hospitality regulations that required feeding and lodging guests for a limited time, the Sufi hospices became centers where members of different levels of society interacted with the Sufi master.

It was only in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that a significant number of outstanding Sufi masters lent their names to groups constituting individual spiritual methods or "ways" (tariqas). It was also common to characterize each way as a "chain" (silsila), with masters and disciples constituting the links. Names of Sufi orders ending in the Arabic feminine form (-iyya), such as Naqshbandiyya, are short hand for "the Naqshbandi way or chain" (al-tariqa al-Naqshbandiyya, al-silsila al-Naqshbandiyya). These chains were plotted backward in time to end ultimately with the Prophet Muhammad as the final human figure;

some chains are duly depicted as continuing with the angel Gabriel and God as the ultimate sources. Nearly all of these chains reach Muhammad via his son-in-law and cousin ‘Ali. A notable exception is the Naqshbandi order, which reaches the Prophet via Abu Bakr instead (although the Naqshbandi lineage includes other early Shi‘i imams). A complication in the notion of the chain as a historical lineage results from the phenomenon of trans-historical or Uwaysi initiation (named after Uways al-Qarani, a contemporary disciple of the Prophet Muhammad in spite of never having met him). On this basis, many Sufis have been initiated by eminent saints of the past or by the immortal prophet Khizr, and this transcendental relationship also falls into the category of a Sufi order. Another challenge to our understanding of Sufi institutions is the presence of deliberately deviant wanderers such as the Qalandars, who criticized the established Sufi orders even as they adopted the charismatic roles of Sufi teachers.

While it is convenient to refer to these organizations as “orders,” with an implicit analogy to the monastic orders of Christianity (Franciscans, Dominicans, etc.), the comparison is inexact. Sufi orders are much less centrally organized than their Christian counterparts, and they have a more fluid hierarchical structure, which is formulated in terms of different types of initiations. Complicating the situation is the phenomenon of multiple initiation, observable at least since the 14th century, through which individual Sufis could receive instruction in the methods of various orders while maintaining a primary allegiance to only one. Sufi orders are not inherently driven by competing and exclusive ideologies, although competition in the socio-political arena is certainly not unknown. The majority of Sufi orders have a Sunni orientation, although Shi‘i orders exist as well, particularly in Iran, but Sufis have been associated with all of the major Islamic legal schools. Although it is commonly asserted that the Sufi orders played an important role in spreading Islam on a

popular level, there is little historical evidence that premodern Sufi leaders took any interest in seeking the conversion of non-Muslims.

The major social impact of the Sufi orders in terms of religion was to popularize the spiritual practices of the Sufis on a mass scale. The interior orientation of the informal movement of early Sufism became available to a much wider public through participation in shrine rituals, the circulation of hagiographies, and the dispensing of various degrees of instruction in dhikr recitation and meditation. Elaborate initiation rituals developed, in which the master's presentation of articles such as a dervish cloak, hat, or staff would signify the disciple's entrance into the order; special procedures governed the initiation of women disciples, though masters were typically male. A frequent feature of initiation was the requirement that the disciple copy out by hand the genealogical "tree" of the order, which would link the disciple to the entire chain of masters going back to the Prophet.

The tombs of many Sufi saints were usually erected at or near their homes. Under Islamic law, the ownership and maintenance of these tombs fell to family members, who may or may not have had spiritual qualifications. In subsequent generations, the devotion of many pilgrims thus created a class of hereditary custodians who were in charge of the finances and operations of the tomb-shrines, which could be combined with a functioning hospice where the teachings of a Sufi order took place, or with other institutions such as mosques or madrasas. Increasingly, however, the Sufi tomb came to be an independent institution, in some cases functioning as the center of massive pilgrimage at the annual festival of the saint; these festivals were variously termed the saint's birthday (mawlid) in the Mediterranean region, or "wedding" ('urs) in Iran and India, in the latter case symbolically celebrating the death anniversary as the "wedding" of the saint's soul with God. The tombs of especially popular saints eventually were surrounded with royal burial grounds, where

kings and members of the nobility would erect their own tombs, to acquire a borrowed holiness or to benefit in the afterlife from the pious exercises of pilgrims to the nearby saints. Examples of this kind of necropolis include the Sufi shrines of Khuldabad and Gulbarga in the Indian Deccan, Tatta in Pakistan, and the various graveyards of Cairo. Since many founders and important figures of the Sufi orders are buried in such shrines, the history of the orders cannot be separated from the phenomenon of pilgrimage to these tombs.

The standard view of the history of Sufi orders advanced by Trimingham suggests that the Sufi tariqa orders enjoyed their “golden age” in the thirteenth century. Trimingham viewed the institutionalization of Sufi orders in the fifteenth century, in the form of organizations (ta'ifas), as a “decline” from original spirituality into sterile ritual and vulgarization. This Orientalist perspective on the Sufi orders, with its background in the Protestant rejection of Catholic tradition and ritual, unfortunately does not adequately represent the later history of Sufism. While the existing scholarly literature on Sufism largely focuses on what is often called its “classical” phase, the ramification of Sufi orders in Muslim countries in the later so-called period of decline was extensive, and the literary and social impact of these more recent developments remains largely unexplored. The “golden age” view of Sufism is also shared by modern Muslim reformists and fundamentalists, who are extremely critical of modern and contemporary Sufism, although they may concede that long-dead Sufi masters of the past were pious Muslims. As Ernst and Lawrence have argued, however, neither of these ideological views of Sufi history does justice to the self-conscious efforts of later Sufi teachers to give life to Sufi teachings in their own time.

Some of the Sufi orders, such as the Qadiriyya (named after ‘Abd al-Qadir Jilani, d. 1166), are spread throughout Islamic lands from North Africa to Southeast Asia. Others are

more regional in scope, like the Shadhiliyya in North Africa (named after Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili, d. 1258), or the Chishtiyya in South Asia (named after Mu'in al-Din Chishti, d. 1236). Particular orders are known for distinctive practices, such as the loud dhikr recitation of the Rifa'iyya, in contrast to the silent dhikr favored by the Naqshbandiyya. Some orders, including the Chishtiyya and the Mevleviyya (the latter being known to Europeans as the "whirling dervishes"), have integrated music and even dance into their practice, while other orders resolutely shun these activities as distractions to spiritual training. Sometimes Sufi leaders, such as the early Chishti masters, tried to keep political power at arm's length, and they advised their followers to refuse offers of land endowment. Some Sufi masters would demonstrate their disdain of the world by refusing to entertain rulers or visit them at court.

On the other hand, certain orders have a history of close association with political power; the Suhrawardiyya and the Naqshbandiyya in India and Iran felt it was important to influence rulers in the proper religious direction, and the Bektashiyya had strong links to the elite Ottoman troops known as the Janissaries. The Safawiyya, once a moderate Sunni order based at Ardebil, became widespread among Turkish tribes on the Persian-Ottoman frontier, and it emerged with a strongly Shi'i and messianic character to become the basis for the Safavid empire that ruled Iran from the sixteenth through the eighteenth century. During the period of nineteenth-century colonialism, when much of the Islamic world fell under European domination, Sufi institutions played varied roles. Hereditary custodians of Sufi shrines in places like the Indian Punjab were treated as important local landlords by colonial officials, and they became further entrenched as political leaders due to British patronage; ironically, the cooperation of these Sufi leaders became essential in later independence movements directed against British control. Similarly, the Senegalese order known as the Muridiyya became heavily involved in peanut farming as a result of being favored by French

colonial authorities, and they have emerged in the post-colonial order as a prominent social and religious institution. With the overthrow of traditional elites by European conquest, Sufi orders in some regions remained the only surviving Islamic social structures, and they furnished the principal leadership for anti-colonial struggles in places such as Algeria (ʿAbd al-Qadir), Libya (the Sanusiyya), the Caucasus (Shaykh Shamil), and China. French administrators in North Africa viewed Sufi orders with suspicion, and colonial scholars produced studies of the Sufi orders designed to predict their possible resistance to or cooperation with official policies.

In the post-colonial period, Sufi orders and institutions have an ambiguous political position, which is inevitably determined in relation to the nation-state. Governments in many Muslim countries have inherited the centralized bureaucratic organization of their colonial predecessors, which sometimes themselves go back to precolonial bureaucracies. In countries like Egypt and Pakistan, efforts have been made to subject the orders and shrines to governmental control. Nonetheless, many of the largest and liveliest Sufi organizations, such as the Burhaniyya in Egypt, flourish without official recognition. Officials frequently appear at Sufi festivals and attempt to direct popular reverence for saints into legitimation of their regime, and governments also attempt to control the large amount of donations attracted to the shrines. State sponsorship of Sufi festivals also aims to enroll support against fundamentalist groups critical of the government, and to redirect reverence for saints in a nationalist direction.

Contemporary fundamentalist movements attack Sufism with a virulence sometimes even more intense than that which is reserved for anti-Western diatribes. Reformers frequently denounce pilgrimage to Sufi tombs as an idolatry that treats humans on the level of God, and they reject the notion that saints are able to intercede with God on behalf of

ordinary believers. Sufi orders have been illegal in Turkey since the 1920s, when Kemal Atatürk secularized the Turkish state. The public performance of the Sufi rituals such as the “whirling dervish” dance of the Mevleviyya, and the dhikr of the Istanbul Qadiriyya, is tolerated only as a cultural activity, which is exported abroad through touring companies and sound recordings; the tomb of the great Sufi poet Jalal al-Din Rumi, which many visitors treat as a shrine, is officially regarded as a museum. This reformist critique of Sufi practice has been internalized in some Sufi circles, such as the Sabiri Chishti tradition associated with the Deoband academy in India; leaders of this group, such as Ashraf `Ali Thanvi, have been highly critical of traditional Sufi practices such as listening to music and visiting the tombs of saints. Certain Ottoman thinkers from Sufi backgrounds (Bediuzzaman Sa`id Nursi, Ken`an Rifai) rejected life in the hospice and insisted on living in the world, and they interpreted Sufi theorists like Ibn `Arabi and Rumi in terms of modern thought and science. Modernist secular thinkers and Muslim countries have also been critical of Sufism, but for different reasons. To authors like Muhammad Iqbal in South Asia and Ahmad Kasravi in Iran, institutional Sufism was the source of fatalism, passivity, and civilizational decline. Sufi advocates such as the Barelwi school in South Asia, and the Naqshbandis led by Shaykh Hisham Kabbani, have responded to these reformist critiques with polemics and apologetics of their own, defending Sufi practices as authentic and even necessary according to Islamic principles. In response to the modernist critique, Sufi theorists have asserted that science ultimately seeks what Sufism alone can offer, and they have adopted the language of psychology and modern technology.

Sufi activities are not publicly tolerated in Saudi Arabia and Iran, since Sufi leaders and tomb cults would constitute an unacceptable alternative spiritual authority to the regnant religious orthodoxy in either case. Still, it is remarkable that the founders of certain

fundamentalist movements, such as Hasan al-Banna' of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and Abu al-'Ala' Mawdudi of the Jama'at-i Islami in India, were exposed to Sufi orders in their youth, and they seem to have adapted certain organizational techniques and leadership styles from Sufism; the main difference is that these movements substitute political ideology for Sufi spirituality, in order to become mass parties in the modern political arena. Another movement that has branched off from Sufism in a hostile fashion is the pietistic Tablighi Jama'at, founded in India and with immense followings in many Muslim countries; although it derives from a branch of the Chishtiyya and still respects the early Sufi saints, this movement considers contemporary Sufi practice to be illegitimate and attempts to dissuade people from pursuing it.

In recent years, Sufi orders have extended their reach into Europe and the Americas, and today branches of orders from India, Iran, Africa, and Turkey are actively attracting adherents in major urban centers in many Western countries. Some orders have also expanded into other Asian and African countries where they were never previously found. Certain groups derived from Sufi orders, such as the International Association of Sufism derived from the teachings of Hazrat Inayat Khan, have only tenuous associations with Islam; they present Sufism as a mystical universal religion that may be pursued through dancing and chanting, without requiring the practice of ritual prayer or other duties of Islamic law. Other groups have more explicit relations with Islamic tradition, including even insistence on the clothing and customs of the order's country of origin. Sufism is taking on some aspects of modern American and European culture, such as joint participation of men and women in contexts where gender separation was the norm in many premodern Muslim societies; several American Sufi groups even have women leaders, something quite rare in the traditional societies where Sufism has flourished. At the same time, Sufism in Europe

and America strives to preserve some of the distinctive rituals and institutions of traditional Sufism—the tomb of Sri Lankan Sufi master Bawa Muhaiyuddin near Philadelphia has already become a place of pilgrimage.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Sufism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been the publicizing of a previously esoteric system of teaching through modern communications media. Today, Sufi orders and shrines produce a continual stream of publications aimed at a variety of followers from the ordinary devotee to the scholar. Evidence suggests that Sufi orders, along with governments, were among the first users of print in Muslim countries in the nineteenth century. Not only traditional treatises on Sufi metaphysics and practice, but also new genres like periodicals and novels, became vehicles for the expression of Sufi thought in multiple languages. Other technologies, such as the audio cassette (especially for music), and now the Internet, have been extremely effective in disseminating Sufi ideas and culture to broad audiences. In short, the Sufi orders have employed the technologies and ideologies of modernity even as they have been forced to respond to them.

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