

# The Academic Study of Sufism at American Universities

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## **Abstract**

This article provides an overview of the history and current situation of the academic study of Sufism (Islamic mysticism) at American universities. It examines Sufism's place within the broader curriculum of Islamic studies as well as some of the main themes and approaches employed by American scholars. In addition, it explains both the academic context in which Sufi studies are located and the role of contemporary positions in Islamic and western thought in shaping its academic study.<sup>1</sup> Topics and issues of particular interest to a Muslim audience, as well as strictly academic observations, will be raised.

In comparison to its role at academic institutions in the traditional Muslim world,<sup>2</sup> Sufi studies has played a larger role within the western academic study of Islam during the twentieth century, especially the later decades. I will discuss the numerous reasons for this in the sections on the institutional, intellectual, and pedagogical contexts.

## **The Institutional Context**

A clear distinction should be made between the institutional contexts of studying Islam in Muslim societies and in the United States. Most departments of Islamic studies at western-style universities in the Muslim world might be comparable to theology departments at American Catholic universities or Protestant seminaries. That is, they employ a large and diverse faculty in such subfields or areas as Shar`iah, `aqidah, hadith, *da`wah*,

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and so on who teach and examine the diverse aspects of Islam's religious tradition academically and, at the same time, from a largely confessional perspective.

Another aspect of the institutional background is the difficulty of defining what is specifically *American* in terms of scholarship and scholars. A previous generation perceived this issue as fraught with complexity, because so many of the leading scholars involved in Islamic studies were post-Second World War European immigrants. For example, in the mid-1950s Hamilton Gibb (d. 1971) moved from Oxford to head Harvard's Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Gustave von Grunebaum (d. 1972) headed UCLA's center, and Franz Rosenthal (d. 2003) was hired by Yale in 1956.<sup>3</sup> According to one scholar, this made for an implicit transfer of a continental Orientalism to the American context.<sup>4</sup> One result of this was the sense of *Islam* as constituting a unifying, essential, and somewhat static factor trying together disparate cultural, intellectual, and social realities in Muslim societies. This debate continues with vigor in the field of Islamic studies as a whole, and within Sufi studies, as will be discussed below.

In American universities today, the academic study of Islam will most likely be found in either area studies or religious studies programs. In fact, during the 1970s its location shifted from being centered in departments or institutes of Oriental or Near Eastern studies to becoming a component of courses offered in religious studies programs.<sup>5</sup> Within the American academy, Near Eastern studies departments are relatively rare today, for generally only major research institutions can offer the range of languages and specialties required to support serious work in this area. In addition, area studies programs have been criticized for training specialists who speak to a narrow range of issues and, as a result, cannot engage in the broader theoretical debates and employ the cross-disciplinary methodologies that would make their work accessible and relevant to a broad range of scholars.<sup>6</sup> By the 1960s and 1970s, the majority of American M.A.s and Ph.D.s in non-western traditions were awarded by disciplines in the social sciences and humanities, not by area studies departments.<sup>7</sup>

Religious studies, on the other hand, has, over the last forty years, become recognized at many institutions as a central component within a liberal arts curriculum. Therefore, it is offered at a greater number and broader range of universities. This is especially the case at religious and private liberal arts institutions. For these reasons, both institutionally and therefore ultimately economically, there is a broader scope for offering undergraduate courses on Sufism, a topic that engages student interest.

Consequently, training in such an area would seem more likely to lead to employment for the prospective graduate with interests in a humanities or social scientific approach to the study of Islam. It would be a distortion, however, to attribute the crest of interest in Sufism to economic pragmatism alone, for the study of Islamic mysticism has proven particularly appealing to western academics attracted to the study of Islam as well as to the western public in general.

### *Language Training and Its Role*

Viewed in a historical context, increased government support for the study of the Muslim world and Islamic languages emerged in the United States after the Second World War, in an era of cold war contestations over the developing nations in Asia and Africa. Before this, internationally oriented teaching and research undertaken at American colleges rarely extended beyond Europe.<sup>8</sup> Such government programs as the Title VI part of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), established in 1958, provided scholarships at major research institutions to students pursuing advanced study related to these security and defense interests.<sup>9</sup> This support improved the extent and quality of appropriate language instruction in many fields, including Islamic studies.

Title VI supported *language development*, especially that of such less commonly taught languages as Arabic, Farsi, Turkish, and Urdu, through initiating language area centers to expand instruction in these languages and related subjects.<sup>10</sup> Scholars trained during this period were the first cohort to have the possibility of government subsidies for research that was not directly tied to military objectives. However, the cold war was definitely part of the background that sustained the need to promote American expertise in critical defense languages.<sup>11</sup> Additional resources were provided through Public Law (PL) 480, a program that reciprocated American foreign aid in food and agricultural assistance by having recipient nations provide copies of all locally published books to the Library of Congress and selected major research universities. This program ran from 1966-80; in 1980, libraries had to begin paying for these materials.<sup>12</sup> As a result, library collections in languages and scholarship of the Muslim world were greatly enhanced in various parts of the United States.

Language training immersion programs were established for American students at the Center for Arabic Studies Abroad in Cairo (CASA), the Berkeley Urdu program in Pakistan, and Bogazici University in Turkey, and other places. These programs caused American scholarship on the Muslim

world to become increasingly vigorous, and even social scientists were expected to develop competence in regional languages.

The recipients of these scholarships for the study of “critical defense languages” were the most capable students. In the initial phases, they did not have to repay the government through any particular service or internship. Since 1992, however, a limited number of National Security Agency-funded programs has required a commitment to try to find employment in security agencies for a certain period after completing the relevant studies.<sup>13</sup>

Ironically, many of the students attracted to Islam and religious studies during the 1970s could be characterized as part of the “generation of seekers”<sup>14</sup> who pursued personal edification as well as intellectual depth in graduate programs. For the first time, large numbers of American students from non-privileged backgrounds were provided with the resources to study abroad for extended periods and were subsidized while mastering the classical Islamic languages required for serious study. The greatest growth in American scholarship on Sufism, then, has arisen from the work done by scholars trained during the 1970s. Alexander Knysh notes that “in the decades after World War Two the majority of Western experts in Sufism were no longer based in Europe, but in North America.”<sup>15</sup>

Training in American graduate schools in Islamic studies normally requires reading knowledge of at least four additional languages: two Islamic languages and two European languages, usually French and German. Another language, such as Spanish or Dutch, may be substituted if there is a compelling rationale related to the topic of the student’s research. In practice, the use of European (especially German) sources is relatively limited among American scholars. This is perhaps due to the fact that so few American secondary schools prepare students with an adequate base in these languages, so that the graduate student might really be able to use the relevant sources and continue using them after completing his/her dissertation. There is also some skepticism as to whether reading European scholarship is as essential as it was during the era of the Orientalists. An additional concern is that this European language requirement has been a stumbling block to some students from Muslim societies who want to pursue graduate degrees in the United States.

The “two language” requirement from the Muslim world also tends to limit the exposure to the secondary language, in many cases Farsi or Turkish, so that the majority of American scholars of Islam work primarily in sources from one Islamic language. This, of course, would also be common in Arab Muslim societies. In terms of scholars of Islam from the non-Arab Muslim world, non-Arabs would have mastery of their own language

as well as Arabic, giving them an edge in comparative work if they were interested in local as well as classical issues. In earlier times, South Asian Muslim scholars of Islam would probably have known Arabic, Farsi, and Urdu at high degrees of mastery. In this case, the issue would be one of the secondary or tertiary language's (Urdu, for example) value in scholarly work. Today significant secondary scholarship, including both translations from Arabic and Farsi as well as analytic studies of Islam, exists in the vernaculars. Thus South Asian and American scholars of pre-modern South Asian Islam usually master Urdu and Farsi, which are in any case both Indo-European languages and therefore easier for English speakers to learn, and then, to a lesser degree, learn to read sources in Arabic.

In past decades, scholars of Islam without at least a basic reading knowledge of Arabic tended to be passed over for academic jobs due to a bias that "real scholars of Islam" work in Arabic sources. Scholars of Sufism in a non-Arab local context would have been affected by this perception, and this often included individuals with a stronger theoretical interest in religious studies theory, such as ritual or in the social sciences generally, rather than in the philological model inherited by Near Eastern studies programs. In terms of South Asian studies in the United States, the Subcontinent's important Muslim presence has historically been underrepresented, for scholars of Islam were expected to be specialists in the Middle East while the South Asian area studies centers were dominated by scholars of India and Hinduism.<sup>16</sup>

Unlike the European experience, area studies in the United States were not focused on colonial or ex-colonial territories and thus featured more comparative and varied interests in aspects of Islam, and therefore in Sufism. Thus, one could argue that American scholarship was more likely to encompass the new "global" Islam of the end of the twentieth century. In fact, the Social Science Research Council established a Committee on the Comparative Study of Muslim Societies in 1986. The Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC) also established a special category of grants for comparative studies, and the Fulbright program developed a Middle East, South Asian, and North Africa comparative research grant. In addition, the growth of the Muslim population in the United States, especially after the 1980s, made the topic of diasporic Islam and transnational migration accessible to American scholars in a more direct way.

### **The Intellectual Context**

The prevailing methodological orientation of western scholars of religion during most of the twentieth century was *phenomenology*, a term used

within the study of religion with a less-than-technical philosophical rigor. One definition holds that “the phenomenology of religion is that method of religious studies which is characterized by a search for the structures underlying comparable religious data that does not violate the self-understanding of the believers.” In addition, the search for similarity is premised on an assumption of similar underlying structures rather than on the dynamics of any historical interaction.<sup>17</sup> Such an approach privileges Sufism among the subfields of Islamic studies, as will be discussed below.

In fact, the position of the study of Islam within the academic study of religion shifted dramatically during the twentieth century. In the late nineteenth century, the project of developing a scientific study of religion was framed in a quest for origins. As a latecomer to the religious scene, Islam was much less germane to that quest than primal religion or even Hinduism and its corpus of Sanskrit-language texts. The phenomenological approach to religious studies that emerged and remained dominant during most of the twentieth century flowered after the carnage of World War I in Europe. This was derived from a philosophical endeavor to shift from neo-Kantian abstractions to religious things – and religious subjects themselves. But here again, Islam was generally at the periphery rather than the center of interest for phenomenologically oriented scholars.

For example, among the dominant approaches to comparative religion during the 1960s and 1970s was the “Patternist school” inspired by the works of Romanian scholar Mircea Eliade (d. 1986). This method was characterized by the assumption that universal patterns underlay human religiosity, somewhat analogous to Carl Jung’s (d. 1961) archetypes. Eliade’s work posited a *homo religiosus*, that humans were by nature religious, although the disenchantment of the modern world had resulted in a rupture with the meaningful and sacralized cosmos that had existed in primal religious traditions. All of this made Islam even less interesting for patternists, some of whom espoused the view that Islam was born in “the full light of history” and thus had minimal space for myth and other “real” religious elements of interest to the phenomenologists of religion. Still, among all of the aspects of Islamic studies, Sufism was probably the most interesting topic for patternists and phenomenologists.<sup>18</sup>

Since Eliade has been mentioned, it might be appropriate to mention his role as a scholar of religion who taught at the University of Chicago Divinity School from 1957 until his retirement. In fact, his approach to comparative or the history of religion dominated the study of religion in the United States in the 1970s. While Eliade was not particularly interested in Islam, his favoring the search for the sacred as displayed in archetypal symbols had a cer-

tain affinity for approaches to Sufism. Some members of the earlier cohort of influential European scholars in Sufi studies, including Henri Corbin (d. 1978) and Fritz Meier (d. 1998), shared his interest in religion and spirituality. Together, they participated in the annual meetings of the Eranos society, a Jungian gathering held near Ascona, Switzerland,<sup>19</sup> and made important contributions to the study of Islam, especially its mystical and esoteric elements. There is a fair amount of secondary scholarship on Corbin's methodology that, at times, criticizes his interpretation of Sufi writings and those of related esoteric Islamic traditions, particularly ones in Shi'ism, as privileging the inner (*batin*) aspect and superimposing the template of repeating archetypal themes. The fact that he represents particular authors according to his own appreciation and affinity with them possibly obscures elements of the texts themselves.<sup>20</sup>

A further characteristic prominent among a number of the earlier cohort of European scholars of Sufism, such as Miguel Asin Palacios (d. 1944), Louis Massignon (d. 1962),<sup>21</sup> and his student Paul Nwyia (d. 1980), was their affiliation with Catholic religious orders. One might argue that this led to a particular perception of and approach to Sufism by these researchers who were similarly committed to a religious vocation. It also led to a search for sympathetic parallels and, according to some critics, a "Christianization" of some aspects of Sufi thought.<sup>22</sup>

Later in the 1970s, however, major theoretical shifts in the broad theoretical debates occurring within the human and social sciences influenced the study of Islam and Sufism in the western academy. Here I am speaking of the increased role of theory derived from anthropology and literary theory, as well as new critical initiatives (e.g., feminism, post-modernism, and post-colonial theory) that interrogated the very foundations of the production of authoritative knowledge. Central to this watershed was Edward Said's *Orientalism*,<sup>23</sup> which took aim in particular at how Islam and the Muslim world had been constructed within the canons of a supposedly neutral gathering and dispassionate interpretation of knowledge. This work had a broad impact across the humanities and social sciences disciplines and laid the basis of post-colonial theory.

In terms of these new theoretical paradigms, I would locate Sufism as generally less central to these debates' political aspects and yet very central to the discussion of what constitutes Islamic normativity and the critique of essentializing Islam as a static and monolithic entity. Ironically, while many Muslims welcome the critique of Orientalism, the marginalization of the study of Sufism in university departments of Islamic studies in the Muslim world and even in Islamic organizations, institutions, and schools in the

West is an example of a similarly exclusionary approach to representing what is normatively *Islamic*.

In a review article on Seyyed Hossein Nasr's contribution to Islamic studies, noted historian John Voll delineated three major movements in the history of the study of Islam during the latter part of the twentieth century:

- a. An initial post-Second World War phase dominated by modernization theory, which postulated a diminishing public role for religion. According to modernization theory, such vestigial Islamic behaviors as Sufism represented no more than a fading and temporary resistance to the inevitable process of secularization.
- b. A period of revisionism that entailed the recognition that religion remains important. However, at this point religion is studied in its exotic or extreme forms, such as new religious movements and cults or fundamentalist and extremist movements.
- c. Finally, there emerged an appreciation for the *normalcy* and persistence of certain aspects of religion, such as its role in conveying meaning and embodiment and expressing emotion.

Within the context of his argument, Voll associates Nasr's concept of "tradition" with the possibility of recognizing the substrata of "everyday" religion permeating Muslim life.<sup>24</sup> While these developments in theorizing about religion are shared across the social sciences, it is unlikely that Voll's validation of Nasr's concept of *tradition* would be universally accepted by either academics or Muslim intellectuals.<sup>25</sup> Why?

### *Sufi Studies and Scholarly Debates*

The pervasive hypothesis or trope of "decline" with regard to Islam in general and Sufism in particular has continued from the days of colonial administrators through modernization theorists, as we have already indicated. British Orientalist and Sufi specialist A. J. Arberry stated in the 1950s that "the age of Ibn al-Farid, Ibn Arabi and Rumi [twelfth and thirteenth centuries CE] represented the climax of Sufi achievement both theoretically and artistically. Thereafter ... the signs of decay appear more and more clearly."<sup>26</sup>

Thus, even in the 1960s both the older Orientalism as well as the new area studies scholarship seemed to agree that Sufism, as a living expression of Islam, was anachronistic and would fade away. The resurgence of religion in the West began in the 1960s with the New Age and counterculture embrace of exotic religious experience and the emergence of new religious movements. This challenge to modernization theory might have been



ignored or explained away, but the Iranian revolution of 1979 compelled social scientists to try and account for religion's resurgence and vitality on a global scale.

In general, scholars of Islamic thought and movements, as well as studies of contemporary Islam, would frame the ongoing contestation for Islam's soul in terms of a debate between Islamic modernists/liberals and fundamentalists/Islamists. In some sense, Sufism falls between the cracks of such a binary model, although it can be related to either term of the equation or presented as a third and mediating force. One example of this is Voll's portrayal of Nasr's traditionalism as representing such an alternative of a normal daily *traditional* routine that could be embraced by conservatives and moderates alike.<sup>27</sup>

Sufism has come to play a more important role among the more recent trends in cultural theorizing, since it is the expression of Islam that most incorporates local cultural elements and embodies *local* Islams. It is also amenable to being studied in terms of "globalization" and negotiations of identity and practice in the modern and the post-modern eras. This meshes with the theoretical interests of the late twentieth-century academy in the local, the embodied, and the multiple articulations of normativity. Such Muslim scholars of Islam as Fazlur Rahman (d. 1988) were initially troubled by the anthropological, or if you will the post-modern, formulation of multiple *Islams* in the sense that the corollary would be "that there is, in fact, no real Islam."<sup>28</sup>

A number of Muslim intellectuals, among them Akbar Ahmed, embraced the concept of post-modernism<sup>29</sup> as well as the concomitant tenet that one should conceptualize in terms of multiple Islams rather than a monolithic and essential Islam featuring a single perspective on a given issue and a lack of appreciation for contextual and historical variations and nuances.

### *The "Politics" of Sufi Studies*

During the 1970s, graduate students interested in the study of Islam in American graduate programs were overwhelmingly from white middle-class and upper-middle-class backgrounds. There were few foreign students, students from Muslim societies or backgrounds, or African Americans. A good number of these American students eventually converted to Islam and pursued Sufism as a personal commitment in addition to being a subject for academic research. Therefore, in terms of personal attitude, many currently active scholars of Sufism in American universities are themselves Sufis, crypto-Sufis, or religious persons from other traditions who are sympathetic

to Sufism. This would be in contrast, for example, to the case of American scholars of Islamic law or Qur'anic studies. This is interesting, because at universities in the Muslim world Sufism is generally considered marginal to Islamic studies and issues of the Qur'an and Islamic law are so sensitive that serious academic work and critical studies are more difficult to undertake.

Sufi studies in North America may be characterized as the subfield of Islamic studies most engaged in bridge building and dialogue between the West and Islam,<sup>30</sup> whereas some other subfields tend to be perceived by Muslims as the home of those who wish to chip away at confidence in Islam. In the interest of fairness, it should be pointed out that the critical historical textual scholar's role is not necessarily politically motivated. In the approach to the study of religious texts established by nineteenth-century Biblical criticism, the quest for textual and redactive anomalies and the investigations of authorship, multiple sources, and identification of their polemic or other motivations became recognized as the primary methodology for studying scripture. It is, therefore, only natural that scholars shaped by this tradition would find it necessary and appropriate to subject Islamic scriptures, the Qur'an, and the hadith literature to the same scrutiny.

The fact that such historical critical methodologies are taboo in much of the Muslim world reflects negatively on the intellectual integrity and objectivity of its scholarship and, ultimately, ensures that the leading academic work in Muslim primary sources will be done elsewhere and then filter back to Muslim societies. This will have an even more deleterious impact than if this project were undertaken by Muslims themselves, since in this case Muslims will be relegated to the roles of editors and compilers of the past rather than interpreters and molders of the present.

Broadly speaking, the tone of studies of Sufism, even in American academic settings, may vary from "Sufism is true" to "Sufism is nice" to "Sufism is a topic worthy of study for social, historical, or any number of analytic reasons within a humanities or social science framework." After 9/11, a political trope emerged in the American public discourse on Sufism that it was the "moderate" or "good" Islam. But this seems to have remained largely the purview of Neocon think tanks<sup>31</sup> and government policy, rather than impacting the patronage or research agenda of academic studies in any substantive way.

Scholars interested in how Sufi ideas might speak to larger sociopolitical issues are developing a liberatory theology of Sufi activism or "engaged Sufism" that may be associated with the idea of an emerging progressive Islam movement among scholars who are Muslim or Muslim sympathizers. Examples are certain articles in Gisela Webb's *Windows of Faith*<sup>32</sup> and the

recent thematic issue *Engaged Sufism* of the South African *Journal for Islamic Studies*.<sup>33</sup>

Gender in Sufism and Sufi studies is also emerging as a more prominent topic. Is Sufism the Islamic practice that is more welcoming of female participation, and do female scholars of Sufism find themselves more warmly received if they work on popular topics, leaving the Orientalist excavation of texts to male scholars who consider that they do the more “serious” work of finding out what Sufis really say?

### *Approaches to Sufism: Discipline or Discipleship*

Reviews of approaches to the study of Islam within American academia undertaken during the 1990s tended to highlight the approaches of three expatriate academics from the Muslim world as emblematic of ideological and methodological diversity: Fazlur Rahman, Ismail al-Faruqi (d. 1986), and Seyyed Hossein Nasr.<sup>34</sup> Of the three, Nasr definitely represented the Sufi tendency. Each of these three individuals could be characterized as being an “engaged Muslim scholar” in his own way. Rahman’s commitment was to Islamic modernism,<sup>35</sup> al-Faruqi’s to Muslim intellectual nativism (the Islamization of Knowledge)<sup>36</sup> and political Islam, and Nasr’s to a specific interpretation of Sufism known as *perennialism* or *traditionalism*.<sup>37</sup>

This gives Nasr’s work a coherence and, at the same time, enables it to advocate for a particular interpretation of Islam that has proven sympathetic and acceptable to a broader American public. However, it has achieved less centrality and even garnered some suspicion within the academic study of Islam.<sup>38</sup> It should be noted that Nasr has received the most prominent recognition within academic circles of any Muslim public intellectual. For example, he was invited to offer the prestigious Gifford Lectures in 1992,<sup>39</sup> is the only Muslim accorded a volume in the “Living Philosophers” series, and has appeared frequently in American documentaries and television interviews regarding Islam.<sup>40</sup>

Traditionalists such as Nasr are influenced by the interpretations of René Guénon (d. 1951) and Fritjhof Schuon (d. 1998), both independent scholar/practitioners of Sufism whose interpretations stressed a transcendent unity of religions and esotericism and condemned the modern desacralization of the world.<sup>41</sup> Through Nasr and his students and academic disciples, this interpretation has come to play an important – if not a dominant – role in certain subfields of Sufi studies, for example, the interpretation of the works of Ibn Arabi and the Akbarian school<sup>42</sup> by such scholars as James Morris,<sup>43</sup> William Chittick,<sup>44</sup> and Sachiko Murata.<sup>45</sup>

The Royal Institute of Islamic Philosophy provided Nasr and his students a base in Tehran from the 1970s until the Iranian revolution. Among his cofollowers of Schuon, whose publications addressed Sufism from a religious studies/theological aspect, are Martin Lings (d. 2005),<sup>46</sup> Victor Danner (d. 1990),<sup>47</sup> and Huston Smith,<sup>48</sup> who popularized Sufism through his work in religious studies and his film “The Sufi Way.”<sup>49</sup> Another film used in religious studies courses that represents Sufism from a perennialist perspective is “The Inner Life.”<sup>50</sup> A marked contrast is the video “I am a Sufi: I am a Muslim,”<sup>51</sup> produced some twenty-five years later by a Belgian film crew. This latter video shows much more of the local cultures and actual Sufi rituals in such diverse cultural contexts as Pakistan and the Balkans. It also incorporates more sensational aspects of Sufi ritual, such as Balkan Rifa’i Sufis sticking skewers through their bodies and South Asian Sufis thrashing around in ecstasy.

Perennialism may play a continuing role in the academic study of Islam through the next generation of Nasr’s students, who approach Islamic studies from a perennialist philosophical perspective and engage in theological reflection on topics such as Islam and environmentalism or peace studies. This group includes many young scholars from the Muslim world and the new cohort of born-or-raised-in-America children of immigrant parents.

At the same time, a variety of scholars and public intellectuals criticize the traditionalist approach. One example is an ongoing debate about what is “Islamic,” which contrasts idealist and materialist approaches, essentialism vs. post-modernism, and so on. For example, such art historians as Oleg Grabar criticize overly facile assertions of a transcendent unity underlying the disparate manifestations of an Islamic aesthetic.<sup>52</sup> Nasr’s presentations of an Islamic science based on traditionalist principles, not only in a historical but in a normative sense, is contested, for example, by Ziauddin Sardar.<sup>53</sup>

The academic culture of Sufi studies with the most similarity to that in the United States is probably that of France, where an Akbarian school of Sufi studies is represented by the works of Michel Chodkewitz, Denis Gril, and others. A Moroccan branch of the Shadhiliyyah Sufi order, known as the Bouchichiyyah, is the prevalent *tariqah* affiliation of many French Sufi academics. A common lineage runs through Michel Valsan (d. 1974), a Romanian student of Eliade and Schuon who settled in Paris and attracted his own circle of French convert disciples. He published a journal, *Etudes Traditionnelles*, that featured a perennialist approach to Sufism and other fields of religious studies.<sup>54</sup>

The perennialist school influences academic publishing on Islam through Nasr’s editing of a series from State University of New York (SUNY)

Press and the efforts of the Islamic Texts Society/Fons Vitae, which concentrates on translations of Sufi classics and Islamic and other spiritualities in a traditionalist mode.

In the American (immigrant) Muslim community outside of the academic world, the most sympathy would have been felt for Isma`il al-Faruqi's approach to Islamic thought, which, like that of such modern Islamist movements as the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan al-Muslimin) and the Jamaat-i Islami, would have seen Sufism as decadent, deviant, and superstitious. Contemporary Islamist discourse tends to view cultural adaptations with suspicion, for example, the use of music in some Sufi traditions, and the general sense is that western or academic interest in Sufism is largely irrelevant to the Muslims' concerns. More recently, an interest in elements of sober Sufism, among them as its teachings of righteousness (*ihsan*) and the purification of the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*), have managed to bridge some of the gap between diasporic Muslims interested in spirituality and puritan elements in the community's leadership.

Interestingly, current academic approaches to Sufism and some of its more recent inroads into Muslim discourse in North America share certain intellectual roots: the teachings of the Algerian Shadhili Sufi Shaykh al-Alawi (d. 1934) and his interpreters,<sup>55</sup> which were popularized among academics and non-Muslims by Schuon, Lings, and Nasr in one lineage.<sup>56</sup> Among diasporic Muslims, these teachings have been disseminated through contemporary Sufi-related groups with Shadhili backgrounds, such as the Murabitun, the Zaytuna Institute (Hamza Yusuf), and the Hashimi-Darqawai under Nuh Ha Mim Keller.<sup>57</sup>

The Pakistani-American scholar Fazlur Rahman's relationship to Sufism was quite complex. He seems very much to have been the heir to the rationalism of such modernists as Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905) and Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938) in finding Sufism's superstitious and fantastic claims, as well as its popular manifestations in folk practices, distasteful. In Islam, his comprehensive overview of the tradition from a modernist perspective, Rahman coined the expression *neo-Sufism*.<sup>58</sup> This spawned about two decades of intellectual debate about whether Sufism had, in fact, changed its focus in a significant way during the eighteenth-century reform movements to emphasize hadith studies and the Prophet's role rather than the gnostic monism of Ibn Arabi.<sup>59</sup> At the same time, his erudition in Islamic philosophy provided readings of Sufis, among them Ahmed Sirhindi (d. 1625)<sup>60</sup> and Ibn Arabi (d. 1240),<sup>61</sup> that inspired interest in Sufism among his students. One may even speak of a "Chicago" school of literary readings of Sufism by such scholars as Michael Sells,<sup>62</sup> Tom Emil Homerin,<sup>63</sup> and later Franklin Lewis,<sup>64</sup> who were

influenced, in turn, by other Chicago faculty members in Near Eastern languages such as Jaroslav Stetkevich (Arabic literature) and Heshmat Moayyad (Persian literature).<sup>65</sup>

Other of Rahman's students who worked on aspects of Sufism ironically became interested in popular forms and the role of local cultures, although with reference to classical texts and teachings. These include studies on Sufi musicians in Egypt and Morocco by the Canadian scholar Earle Waugh,<sup>66</sup> one of the first figures trained in both religious studies and Islam at the University of Chicago Divinity School, and Valerie Hoffman,<sup>67</sup> and Marcia Hermansen,<sup>68</sup> who were among Rahman's later students in Near Eastern languages and civilizations.

Another academic lineage of American scholars of Sufism descends from Annemarie Schimmel (d. 2003), who taught at Harvard from 1967 until her retirement in 1992.<sup>69</sup> Schimmel's forte was a deep acquaintance with the Muslim world, especially Turkey and South Asia, and her interest in classical and vernacular languages and poetry. She wrote entire monographs on such individual Sufis as Iqbal (*The Sound of Gabriel's Wing*),<sup>70</sup> Rumi (*The Triumphal Sun*),<sup>71</sup> and Mir Dard (*Pain and Grace*).<sup>72</sup> She also authored an encyclopedic work on Sufism: *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*.<sup>73</sup> Her approach was linguistic and thematic, stressing translation and interpretation as well as historical description.

Carl Ernst, Schimmel's student, also presents Islam and Sufism sympathetically with an emphasis on South Asian materials. Ernst discusses the roots of the academic study of Sufism<sup>74</sup> in the West, as did Schimmel in several of her writings, including the preface to *Mystical Dimensions*.<sup>75</sup> Other of Schimmel's students who have worked on various aspects of Sufism include Peter Awn, James Morris, Ali Asani, and Arthur Buehler.

Summarizing Ernst, western perceptions of Sufism were shaped by the colonial experiences of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Early colonial administrators perceived Sufis as deceptive *faqirs* and mendicant dervishes and exaggerated their exotic nature. Later colonial officials embraced Sufis (intellectually) as kindred spirits in an era when religion's hold was loosening in Europe. In their writings, largely based on Persian mystical verses, Sufis were understood as poets, wine-drinkers, and free-thinkers whose "pantheism" and "theosophy" were not associated with official Islam.<sup>76</sup>

Among other scholars of Sufism based at American universities whose students have gone on in the field are Hamid Algar (Berkeley), who trained Alan Godlas and Barbara von Schlegell. Interestingly, in terms of intellectual cultures, Princeton, despite have a strong program in Islamic studies,

has produced only one American scholar of Sufism (Jonathan Katz) to my knowledge. UCLA, which does not have a Sufi specialist, has graduated scholars of Sufism such as Vincent Cornell and Qamar al-Huda.

Gerhard Bowering (Yale) and his colleagues mentored Jerry Elmore, Jamal Elias, Shehzad Bashir, Joseph Lumbard, and Amina Steinfels, whose careful studies of classical Sufis follow in a tradition of strong philological training and historical and hermeneutic interests.<sup>77</sup> Bowering himself had worked at the McGill Institute of Islamic Studies in Montreal with Hermann Landolt, as did Ahmet Karamustafa (St. Louis University).

An academic program with a strong initial record in Sufi studies is that of the Research Triangle consortium in North Carolina, where Bruce Lawrence, Carl Ernst, Vincent Cornell (for a time), and more recently Ebrahim Moosa direct work in this field. Among their graduates in Sufi studies over the past decade or so have been Omid Safi, Scott Kugle, Rob Rosehnal, and Zia Inayat Khan.

In his review article on the historiography of Sufi studies, Knysch observes the existence of “intellectual dynasties” descending from the great European scholars Massignon to Nwyia and Corbin; from Nicholson (d. 1945) to Arberry (d. 1969); in Germany from Richard Hartman (d. 1965) to Helmut Ritter (d. 1971) and Meier, and then from Meier to Richard Gramlich (d. 2006) and Bernd Radtke.<sup>78</sup> We note the development of a similar process of scholarly *silsilas* in the American context. It is interesting and instructive to note which scholars studied with particular mentors and from which institutions they graduated. While not absolutely determinative, it is clear that only major universities specialized in the field of Islamic studies have produced career scholars of Sufism and that their mentors’ methodological perspectives and commitments have often had profound effects on their pupils’ research agendas and choices.

### **The Pedagogical Context: Teaching Sufism**

I conducted an informal survey on the teaching of Sufism by soliciting responses through an e-mail to the list of scholars of Islam in the American Academy of Religion. Total responses came to about thirty, to which I added some twenty more on the basis of personal acquaintance. The results, roughly speaking, indicate that about 90 percent of the faculty teaching courses on Sufism are in religion, religious studies, or theology departments and programs, and that less than 10 percent are in area studies programs.

Introductory courses of Islam are offered at all of the institutions that responded to the survey. During a typical fourteen-week term, an average

of two or more weeks are spent on Sufism within such courses. About half of the survey respondents identified themselves as having a primary interest and expertise in Sufism within the subfields of Islamic studies. These rough statistics lead to the conclusion that Sufism usually plays a significant role in how Islam is presented in introductory courses at American universities. At the same time, this inclusion seems to be a fair recognition of Sufism's importance within Islamic thought and cultures, both historically and today.

The first survey of Sufism in English was Arberry's *The Mystics of Islam*. Some thirty years later (1975) Annemarie Schimmel published *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. The extensive growth of scholarship documented by Schimmel at that time demonstrated how far the field had come by then in terms of having translations, critical editions and studies of individual mystics, and regional mystical subcultures available so that a much more detailed presentation of Sufism's history could be made. Now, some thirty more years after Schimmel's work, we find quite a selection of works that introduce Sufism to an undergraduate or popular audience, including Ernst's *Shambhala Guide to Sufism*, Knysh's *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History*,<sup>79</sup> and Chittick's *Sufism: A Short Introduction*.<sup>80</sup>

An introductory text used in many introductory courses on Islam is *The Vision of Islam* by Chittick and Murata.<sup>81</sup> This could be considered the first textbook on Islam written from a perennialist "Sufi" perspective, for it focuses on philosophical or theological doctrines rather than on historical events and, in particular, on traditionalist thought rather than on the activities of prominent individuals within the tradition.

## Conclusion

Among the subfields of Islamic studies, the state of Sufi studies in American universities would, at present, be considered quite robust. In comparison with scholarship undertaken before the 1970s, demands on contemporary scholars of Islam and, in particular, scholars of Sufism, including the need to master new theoretical approaches to the material, have created some tension with philological projects of translation and editing texts. Such undertakings are rarely supported by tenure committees and granting agencies.

As universities across the United States embraced internationalization and interdisciplinarity, those fields of study (e.g., Sufism) that engender connectivity across regions and other disciplines (e.g., music, anthropology, literature, philosophy, and philosophy) are well-positioned within the current curriculum.



At the academic level, Sufism's normative status within Islam is unproblematic in western academic settings, and thus can flourish untrammelled by ideological interference. Older academic discussions of its "origins," whether universalist, Qur'anic, and so on, reflect issues that are no longer salient to the academic study of religion. The broader designation of *Islamic mysticism* has been adopted within the American Academy of Religion in order to embrace a broader range of work, including Isma'ili studies and the study of esoteric sciences within Muslim communities.

In fact, we now see a significant body of secondary scholarship on such individual Sufis as Ibn Arabi, al-Ghazzali, and Rumi. We may aspire to a time when the situation of Sufi studies will be comparable to that of such fields as philosophy or literature, where the secondary literature on particular figures itself becomes a corpus for study and interpretation.

### Endnotes

1. Earlier review articles on Sufi studies include R. Caspar, "Muslim Mysticism: Tendencies in Recent Research" (originally published in 1962 in French), in Merlin L. Swartz, ed., *Studies in Islam* (New York: Oxford, 1981), 164-81 and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Studies in Sufism in the 1950s and 1960s," *Hamdard Islamicus* 12, no. 2 (1989): 1-9 (with almost no American contributions noted). Each of these early review articles concluded that most work to date had focused on editing and disseminating Sufism's basic texts and noted the preponderance of work on Ibn Arabi and the role of "traditionalist" scholars. Each author expressed a certain optimism that exposure to works of classical Sufism would prove valuable in the Muslim world in countering the influence of literalists, such as Wahhabis.  
 Later in the 1970s, David P. Brewster published a useful article entitled "The Study of Sufism: Towards a Methodology" in *Religion* (1976): 31-47. The recent article by Alexander Knysh, "Historiography of Sufi Studies in the West," in *A Companion to the History of the Middle East*, ed. Youssef M. Choueiri (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 106-31 refrains from commenting on recent (post-1970s) American scholarship and developments. It is also heavily slanted toward the philological approach.
2. Here I am referring to universities and research institutes that follow a "modern" western model of disciplinary scholarship, although the situation in traditional madrasas would probably not include much scope for studying Sufism in a historical critical or even in a practical sense.
3. Timothy Mitchell, "The Middle East in the Past and Future of Social Science," in *The Politics of Knowledge: Area Studies and the Disciplines*, ed. David L. Szanton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 82.

4. Ahmad Dallal, "The Study of Islam in American Scholarship: The Persistence of Orientalist Paradigms." Available online at <http://francestanford.stanford.edu/Conferences/Papers/Dallal.pdf>. Downloaded Nov. 11, 2006.
5. Mitchell argues that the established programs of "Oriental Civilizations" at major American universities focused on archeology and that museums may have ultimately impeded the study of later Islamic civilization in the region. Mitchell, "The Middle East," 78.
6. Rashid Khalidi, "Is There a Future for Middle Eastern Studies?" (1994 MESA presidential address.) <http://fp.arizona.edu/mesassoc/Bulletin/Pres%20Addresses/khalidi.htm>. Viewed Jan. 7, 2007. This was also a theme of the volume edited by Richard C. Martin, *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona, 1985).
7. David L. Szanton, "The Origin, Nature, and Challenges of Area Studies in the United States," in *The Politics of Knowledge*, 7.
8. *Ibid.*, 5-6.
9. For a history of Title VI, see "The History of Title VI and Fulbright-Hays: An Impressive International Timeline." Available online at [www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/iegps/history.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/iegps/history.html). Viewed Nov. 25, 2006.
10. In addition to the National Research Centers, Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowships (FLAS), and International Research and Studies (IRS), Title VI today supports other interrelated programs, including the Undergraduate International Studies and Foreign Language Program (UISFL), the Language Resource Centers (LRCs), and the American Overseas Research Centers (AORCs). Available online at [www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/iegps/title-six.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/iegps/title-six.html). Viewed Feb. 24, 2007.
11. Richard D. Brecht and William P. Rivers, *Language and National Security in the 21st Century: The Role of Title VI/Fulbright-Hays in Supporting National Language Capacity in the U.S.* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 2000).
12. Available online at [www.library.uiuc.edu/administration/collections/tools/developmentstatement/south\\_and\\_west\\_asian\\_studies.htm](http://www.library.uiuc.edu/administration/collections/tools/developmentstatement/south_and_west_asian_studies.htm). Viewed Nov. 25, 2006.
13. Jeffrey J. Kuenzi, "Foreign Language and International Studies: Federal Aid under Title VI of the Higher Education Act." Available online at [http://digital.library.unt.edu/govdocs/crs//data/2005/upl-meta-crs-7881/RL31625\\_2005Jun21.pdf?PHPSESSID=aef02ba92c72ceb1f12c6889b7497d2b](http://digital.library.unt.edu/govdocs/crs//data/2005/upl-meta-crs-7881/RL31625_2005Jun21.pdf?PHPSESSID=aef02ba92c72ceb1f12c6889b7497d2b). Viewed Jan. 3, 2007, CRS-11.
14. Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993).
15. Alexander Knysh, "The Historiography of Sufi Studies," 122.
16. Nicholas B. Dirks, "South Asian Studies: Futures Past," in *The Politics of Knowledge*, 361.
17. Arvind Sharma, "Towards a Definition of the Phenomenology of Religion" *Milla wa Milia*, no. 16 (1976): 17, as summarized in Mujiburrahman "The

- Phenomenological Approach in Islamic Studies: An Overview of a Western Attempt to Understand Islam,” *Muslim World* 91, nos. 3/4 (2001): 425-49, 426.
18. Brewster wrote in 1976: “Sufism, together with Islamic Art and Architecture, represents one of the more ‘immediate’ and accessible aspects of Islam for the Western student.” Brewster, “The Study of Sufism,” 31.
  19. Steven M. Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade, and Henry Corbin at Eranos* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1999).
  20. Jacques Waardenburg, *L’Islam dans le miroir de l’Occident* (Paris and The Hague: Mouton, 1963); Charles J. Adams, “The Hermeneutics of Henry Corbin, in *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*. R. C. Martin, ed. (Tucson: Univ. of Arizona, 1985, 129-50); Brewster, “The Study of Sufism,” 32; Caspar, “Muslim Mysticism,” 31-32; and Knysh, “Historiography of Sufi Studies.”
  21. Studies on Massignon include Waardenburg in *L’Islam dans le miroir* and a recent article, “Louis Massignon (1883-1962) as a student of Islam,” in *Welt des Islams* 45, no. 3 (2005): 312-42; Herbert Mason, *Memoir of a Friend: Louis Massignon* (Notre Dame, IN.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), and Julian Baldick, “Massignon: Man of Opposites,” *Religious Studies* 23, no. 1 (1987): 29-39.
  22. Asin Palacios entitles one of his books *El Islam Christianizado*, and Massignon identified al-Hallaj with Christ and his doctrines with the entry of incarnation theology into Islam through Sufism. Brewster mentions Caspar’s work, as well as the works (in French) of Georges Anawati and Louis Gardet, *Mystique Musulmane: aspects et tendances, expériences et techniques* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1961) in this regard. Some aspects of this phenomenon are discussed in Knysh, “Historiography of Sufi Studies,” 116-17, 123.
  23. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).
  24. I find Voll’s thesis problematic and refer to this later in the essay.
  25. In any case, *tradition* is itself a multivalent and contested term.
  26. A. J. Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam* (London: Georger Allen and Unwin, 1950), 119. Cited in John Voll, “Changing Western Approaches to Islamic Studies and Seyyed Hossein Nasr’s Vision,” in *Beacon of Knowledge*, eds. Mohammad H. Faghfoory and Huston Smith (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2003), 83.
  27. Voll, “Changing Western Approaches, 78, 87-88.
  28. Fazlur Rahman, “Islamic Studies and the Future of Islam,” *Islamic Studies: A Tradition and Its Problems*, ed. Malcolm H. Kerr (Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1980), 131.
  29. Akbar S. Ahmed, *Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise* (London: Routledge, 1992).
  30. See Waardenburg *L’Islam dans la miroir*, 77-8, on Hongronge.
  31. Cheryl Bernard, “Civil Democratic Islam: Partners, Resources, Strategies,” Rand Report, 2004. Available online at [www.rand.org/pubs/monograph\\_reports/MR1716/index.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1716/index.html). Viewed Jan. 07, 2007.

32. Gisela Webb, *Windows of Faith: Muslim Women Scholar-Activists in North America* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000).
33. Sa'diyya Shaikh and Scott Kugle eds. *Journal for Islamic Studies*, no. 26 (2006).
34. Yvonne Haddad, *Muslims of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).
35. Fred M. Denny and Earle H. Waugh, (eds.), *The Shaping of an American Islamic Discourse: A Memorial to Fazlur Rahman* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998).
36. For a discussion of the Islamization of Knowledge project, see al-Faruqi's own pamphlet "Islamization of Knowledge" (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982) and Leif Stenberg, *The Islamization of Science: Four Muslim Positions Developing an Islamic Modernity* (Lund Studies in History of Religions, No. 6) (New York: Coronet Books, 1996).
37. Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World* (New York: Oxford, 2004); Carl Ernst, "Traditionalism: The Perennialist Philosophy in Islamic Studies," *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 28, no. 2 (1994): 176-81. Available online at <http://www.unc.edu/~cernst/Traditionalism.htm>. Viewed Jan. 6, 2007.
38. Jane Smith, "Seyyed Hossein Nasr: Defender of the Sacred and Islamic Traditionalism," in *The Muslims of America* ed. Yvonne Y. Haddad (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 80-95.
39. Published as *Knowledge and the Sacred* (Edinburgh University Press: 1981). Annemarie Schimmel was also invited to give the lectures in 1991-92, which is notable, given the emphasis on Sufi studies as representing Islamic theology in this series (Muhammad Arkoun has been the only Muslim intellectual besides Nasr invited thus far).
40. For example, Bill Moyers' "Islam and Nature" as well as the "Traditional World of Islam" series that was created for the 1976 "World of Islam" festival in London. For a critique of this festival and its presentation of the "Unity" of Islamic art and culture, see Oleg Grabar, "Geometry and Ideology: The Festival of Islam and the Study of Islamic Art," in *A Way Prepared: Essays on Islamic Culture in Honor of Richard Bayly Winder*, eds. Farhad Kazemi and R. D. McChesney (New York and London: New York University Press, 1988), 145-52.
41. For the influence of "traditionalist" on Titus Burkhardt, see R. Caspar, "Muslim Mysticism," 174-75; and Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, 84-89, passim
42. Ibn Arabi was known as *al-shaykh al-akbar* (the greatest shaykh), and thus his teachings are said to constitute an Akbarian school transmitted through intellectual and spiritual successors.
43. James Morris was among the group that studied at the Iranian Academy with Nasr. He works extensively on Ibn Arabi. Some of his works are *The Reflective Heart: Discovering Spiritual Intelligence in Ibn `Arabi's Meccan Illuminations* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2005); *The Wisdom of the Throne: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University

- Press, 1981). Morris' scholarly overviews of Ibn Arabi studies are available at [www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/interpreters.html](http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/interpreters.html). (Viewed June 6, 2007.) These include the review articles "Ibn Arabî and His Interpreters," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, part I, vol. 106 (1986): 539-51; part II, 733-756; and part III, vol. 107 (1987): 101-19.
44. William Chittick is a noted translator and interpreter of Sufi thought, in particular works of Ibn Arabi's school.
  45. Sachiko Murata, like her husband William Chittick, studied at the Iranian Academy with Nasr during the 1970s. She is the author of *The Tao of Islam* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992) and works on Sufism and Chinese thought.
  46. Martin Lings was Schuon's deputy in England and authored *The Book of Certainty* [by Abu Bakr Siraj Ed-Din] (New York: S. Weiser, 1970) and *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century: Shaikh Ahmad al-'Alawi: His Spiritual Heritage and Legacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).
  47. Victor Danner was professor of Islamic studies at Indiana University Bloomington. He authored *Ibn Ata Allah: The Book of Wisdom* (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978).
  48. Huston Smith is a major figure in the study of world religions from a philosophical and "traditionalist" perspective.
  49. Hartley Films, 1979.
  50. "The Inner Life" was part of the "Traditional World of Islam" series prepared for the World of Islam festival in 1976.
  51. "I am a Sufi: I am a Muslim," 52 min. 1996.
  52. Oleg Grabar, "Geometry and Ideology" in Kazemi and McChesney, *A Way Prepared*, 145-52.
  53. For Sardar's criticism of perennialist theories of Islamic science, see Leif Stenberg, *The Islamization of Science* (Lund, Sweden: Lund University, 1996).
  54. Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World*, 133-35.
  55. On al-Alawi, see Martin Lings, *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993).
  56. The Shadhiliyyah Maryamiyyah.
  57. Marcia Hermansen, "The 'Other' Shadhilis of the West" in *The Shadhiliyya*, ed. Eric Geoffroy (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2005), 481-99.
  58. Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (New York: Anchor, 1968), 239-40.
  59. On the neo-Sufism debate, see the extensive critique of this concept in R. S. O'Fahey and Bernd Radtke, "Neo-Sufism Reconsidered," *Der Islam* 70, no. 1 (1993): 52-87, and the discussion in R. S. O'Fahey, *Enigmatic Saint: Ahmad ibn Idris and the Idrisi Tradition* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1990), 1-9.
  60. Fazlur Rahman edited and commented on some of his writings in *Selected Letters of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi* (Karachi: Iqbal Academy, 1968).
  61. Rahman did not produce scholarly work on Ibn Arabi, but he often taught courses on his thought due to student demand. He did produce a monograph

on the more philosophical elements of Mulla Sadra Shirazi's thought that could be considered an alternative to Nasr's more "perennialist" reading.

62. Michael Sells, *Early Islamic Mysticism: Sufi, Qur'an, Mi'raj, Poetic and Theological Writings* (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1996). He translated some of Ibn Arabi's poetry. See Michael A. Sells, tr., *Stations of Desire: Love Elegies from Ibn 'Arabi and New Poems* (Jerusalem: Ibis Editions, 2000).
63. Homerin has worked extensively on the Egyptian Sufi poet Umar ibn al-Farid: *Sufi Verse, Sainly Life* (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2001).
64. Franklin Lewis, *Rumi Past and Present: East and West* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000).
65. Suzanne Stetkevych, ed., *Reorientations: Studies in Arabic and Persian Poetry* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1994).
66. Waugh is Canadian and has spent most of his career at the University of Alberta. *The Munshidin of Egypt: Their World and Their Song* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989) and *Memory, Music and Religion: Morocco's Mystical Chanters* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005).
67. Valerie J. Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics, and Saints in Modern Egypt* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1995).
68. The author of this article, who works on South Asian Sufism and Sufis in America, among other topics.
69. A brief autobiography is available online at [www.acls.org/op21.htm](http://www.acls.org/op21.htm). Stefan Wild, "In Memoriam Annemarie Schimmel" (in German) *Die Welt des Islams* 43, no. 2 (2003):131-42.
70. Schimmel (Leiden: Brill, 1963).
71. Schimmel (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993).
72. Schimmel (Leiden: Brill, 1976).
73. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975).
74. Carl Ernst, *Shambhala Guide to Sufism* (Boston: Shambhala, 1997), 1-18.
75. Annemarie Schimmel. Another treatment of Sufism's influence on the pre-modern West is Michel Chodkiewicz, "La réception du Soufisme par l'occident: conjectures et certitudes" in *The Introduction of Arabic Philosophy into Europe*, eds. Charles Butterworth and Blake Kessel (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 136-49.
76. Ernst, *Shambhala Guide*, 1-18.
77. Available online at [www.yale.edu/religiousstudies/fields/islamic.html#graduates](http://www.yale.edu/religiousstudies/fields/islamic.html#graduates).
78. Knysh, "Historiography of Sufi Studies," 106-31, 122.
79. Knysh (Leiden-Boston-Köln: E. J. Brill, 2000).
80. Chittick (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000).
81. William Chittick and Sachiko Murata, *The Vision of Islam* (New York: Paragon, 1994).