Markus Dressler, Ron Geaves, and Gritt Klinkhammer, eds.
Sufis in Western Society: Global Networking and Locality
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Contributors to the volume, Raudvere and Gaši, skillfully note that "cherished, unfamiliar or rejected—attitudes of Sufism are seldom neutral" (163). If one traces the evolution of Sufism to Western lands, this aneutrality is accentuated. Thus, Sufism in the West is understandably a growing if understudied field. There is a dearth of surveys on the topic, and this makes additional attention to global networking and locality especially welcome. The authors seek to challenge the romantic and literary biases of Orientalist scholarship, and the eleven chapters rise to the occasion because most focus on particular living Sufi communities.

The opening chapters set the methodological tone. In the Introduction, the editors emphasize "Sufism as a lived religion" and they rightly acknowledge that Sufism often acts "as a bridge between Eastern and Western spiritual or mystical philosophy" (4). In Chapter 2, Peter Beyer uses the term *glocalization* while arguing that "as globalized structures, religions are no longer . . . regional affairs which can be understood primarily with reference to a particular core region" (13). He narrates a story of two Canadian Muslim women who might experience different kinds of belief and practice on a spectrum of religiosity. Strangely, however, only once in the article does he mention "Sufism," and the false dichotomy "Sufi/scriptural," which contrasts with the major concepts in the book, such as the primacy of the Qur'an for many Sufis.

In Chapter 3, which is among the strongest in the volume, Marcia Hermansen discusses the global relationships of Shadhili and Naqshbandi orders, as well as various incarnations of the Gülen movement—communities that have become truly globalized. She astutely notes that Sufism, not only today but also historically, "may be considered a major example of classical networking in Muslim societies" (27). This can be seen by the

importance of shrine visitation, diverse social strata that comprise Sufi orders—as well as Sufi prominence in the spread of Islam through networks of preaching, trade, and clientage. Moreover, Hermansen notes that Sufis are often particularly "adaptable to local linguistic and cultural conditions" (Ibid.).

In the fourth chapter, Michael Frishkopf recounts an Egyptian shaykh's visit to Edmonton and focuses on the "soundworld" as a medium of discourse to illuminate tensions between esoteric- and exoteric-oriented Muslim communities.

In Chapter 5, Mark Dressler focuses on Sufis in New York who hold a "double-minority position" because they must confront the "Muslim mainstream as well as the non-Muslim public" (79). He illustrates how New York Sufi groups have managed multiple identities following 9/11—whether by belonging to multiple Sufi groups, ethnic cultures, or ideologies—while simultaneously promoting the importance of pluralism.

Chapters 6 and 7 explore Sufism in Britain. Ron Geaves refers to a biological term, *binary fission*—the process of reproduction among amoeba that entails dividing to create duplicates of themselves—as an analogy for the ways in which Sufi groups are able to recreate "cultural forms of the locality of origin" in Britain (97). And Pnina Werbner examines a charismatic Sufi shaykh's interest in numerology while detailing the elaborate means that he has used, including computer technology, to engage his quest of unlocking divine secrets through numbers.

Chapters 8 and 9 look at Sufism in Germany. Gritt Klinkhammer explores "transethnic Sufism," and recounts the history of German Orientalism, arguing that German Orientalism stands distinct from its British and French counterparts partially due to its lack of colonial engagement in Muslim lands. Therefore, he maintains that Germans have witnessed a unique development of interest in Sufism. Søren Lassen examines a Burhaniyya Sufi Order in Germany, noting the generational changes that its members have undergone and observing the tensions between local and foreign influences. He explains that the founder of the order was from Sudan, and spoke only Arabic and never visited Europe, whereas most of the German members today are of German ancestry. Lassen also discusses the recent influx of Sudanese members of the order into Germany and their interactions with the native German members.

In Chapter 10, Catharina Raudvere and Ašk Gaši examine a Bosnian immigrant community in Sweden. They discuss, among other topics, how the group has maintained its Bosnian identity, which is in part due to state

support for ethno-culturally specific spaces. In addition to the group's large numbers, another reason for the group's keeping its identity is its development of a Bosnian Sufi vernacular.

In the last chapter, Mark Sedgwick offers an analysis of how Sufi and "neo-Sufi" literature has been received by a Western public in the second half of the twentieth century. He discusses works by Muslim authors such as Idries Shah and Inayat Khan, as well as non-Muslim authors like Paulo Coelho. Looking at such authors vis-à-vis the classic Sufi literature of Rumi and Hafiz, for example, Sedgwick compares sales data in the United States and the United Kingdom. He also argues that Sufi literature sold in the market of "Western spirituality" must be understood in its cultural context.

Sufis in Western Society demonstrates insightful and original research, but also faces certain structural and substance-related challenges. One might even get the impression that a better serving subtitle would focus not on networking—but rather on identity, authority, or authenticity, themes that are arguably more central to the collection.

Moreover, although Sedgwick, Dressler and others do make references to non-Muslim Sufism, there is virtually no attention given to non-Muslim Sufi groups in the volume.

Since there are many non-Muslim Sufi groups in Western societies, and since living tradition, authority and authenticity are major emphases of the book, the absence of a chapter explicitly treating non-Muslim Sufis is conspicuous.

Also, importantly, while the authors perceptively problematize the boundaries between the "local" and the "global," the conceptual limitations of "Western" do not receive similar critique. Three chapters are devoted to continental Europe, but there still remains characteristically disproportionate attention to Britain and the United States—leaving the majority of North America, South America, Australia, and other parts of the Western world out of the conversation.

Furthermore, to the point of distraction, the text contains a number of formatting inconsistencies, typographical errors, and factual discrepancies. For example, referring to the Qur'an, Werbner mentions the letters *alif*, *beit*, and *yey*. However, *beit* is not Arabic but rather Hebrew, and *yey* is neither Arabic nor Hebrew. Werbner also refers to a "beautifully illustrated Qur'an in Urdu," though he probably meant "translation of Qur'an," since the Qur'an is an Arabic text.

In terms of formatting, the use of diacritics in the volume is erratic, and the glossary of Sufi terms has several mistakes—at times confusing singular and plural nouns, misusing adjectives as nouns, and supplying imprecise definitions for terms. Also, the low resolution black and white pictures scattered throughout the volume offer little if anything to its substance.

In the face of critiques, however, the articles in *Sufis in Western Society*, on the whole, present adroit analyses of living Sufi communities in the West, while demonstrating how these groups negotiate their niches in the face of geographical and cultural heterogeneity. The volume paints a diverse picture of Sufism by exploring dynamic expressions of Islam, and in this regard, the book is useful and should be of interest not only to sociologists and religious studies scholars but also to those interested in diaspora studies and globalization.

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