

***Sufism and Society : Arrangements of the Mystical in the Muslim World, 1200-1800***, edited by John J. Curry and Erik S. Ohlander (Routledge Sufi Series, 12), (London & New York: Routledge, 2012), xiv + 281 pp, ISBN: 978-0-415-78223-4, £75.00 (hb)

In this timely and ambitious volume, the editors, John Curry and Erik S. Ohlander, have undertaken to collect and edit material dealing with one of the most historiographically fraught topics and periods in Islamic history: the history of Sufism from the so-called “Middle Period” up to the cusp of modernity. As the editors note in their introduction, while the early centuries of Sufism have been relatively well served by historians and others, and the period after 1800 has been treated extensively by historians, anthropologists, and religious studies scholars, the intervening centuries have been studied in a much more haphazard, discontinuous manner, when they have been studied at all. Pernicious paradigms of Sufi “decline” and “corruption,” particularly in light of the rise of so-called “*tariqa* Sufism,” have yet to be completely extirpated. Large gaps – chronological, thematic, and geographical – remain, with entire periods, places, and figures from the later medieval to early modern periods remaining virtual *terra incognita*. Yet this situation, as the editors argue, has begun to change. In addition to this volume, one calls to mind, for instance, Nile Green’s *Sufism: A Global History*, also published in 2012; the recent flurry of monographs on early modern Ottoman Sufism are also positive signs of change in the historiographic field. While this volume of twelve papers obviously cannot resolve the above field-wide problems, it does fill in some lacunae, offer many provocative jumping-off points for further research, and, perhaps most importantly, demonstrates awareness on the part of many scholars of the problems and potential solutions within the field.

Curry and Ohlander’s introduction to the volume frames the broad issues mentioned above, before summarizing and situating the twelve contributions that follow. These contributions have been grouped into four thematic sections, with a diversity of sub-themes and chronological and geographical locations. All seek, with varying degrees of success, to situate their specifically Sufi subjects within their wider

socio-cultural settings, drawing upon a wide variety of theoretical and analytical models.

Grouped under the rubric of “historiography” are three articles arguing for reappraisals and reuses of particular textual records. Blain H. Aurer’s article rejects the still oft-repeated trope of North Indian Sufi rejection of political power, arguing instead for a much more complicated relationship – in “real life” and in textual representation – between prominent Sufis and the holders of political power. Erik S. Ohlander looks at the relationship between textual representations of a Multanese Sufi saint and the “transregional” networks linking Mecca with the rest of the Islamic world, arguing for a sophisticated re-reading of hagiographical depictions of connections, miraculous and otherwise, with the Hijāz. Sean Foley contends for an expansion beyond hagiography in his discussion of the early nineteenth century Ottoman Sheikh Khālid. Arguing for a dual reading of hagiography and documentary evidence, Foley also tries to incorporate political science theory, though with somewhat underwhelming results. Moving on to the more amorphous category of “landscapes,” Ovamir Anjum’s broadly ranging article attempts to argue for the importance of Sufism as an engine of social stratification in “post-‘Abbāsīd Islam,” looking at both “canonical” Sufi writings and at critiques of Sufism by figures such as Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim. While accurately reflecting the socially pervasive nature of later medieval Sufism, Anjum’s conclusions are more sweeping than perhaps warranted. Zeynep Yürekli takes a more focused approach, examining the relationship between architectural patronage and design, on the one hand, and hagiography on the other, in the early modern Ottoman, Şafavid, and Mughal empires. Finally, Afshan Bokhari presents the fascinating history of the Mughal princess and Sufi devotee Jahān Ārā Begam through an art history lens; unfortunately, her article is also probably the most uneven and problematic in the collection.

Leading the “doctrine and praxis” section, Matthew Ingalls’ excellent treatment of the development of *fatwās* concerning Sufism in Mamlūk Egypt works to undermine many assumptions about the relationships existing among Sufis, legal scholars, “high” and “popular” religion, and networks of power in late medieval Egyptian society. Rıza Yıldırım makes an admirable, if uneven, attempt to analyze the development of Qizilbash ritual in light of seemingly similar *fi-tuwwa* rituals practiced in Anatolia. Moving forward chronologically,

Alberto Fabio Ambrosio introduces the work and thought of an important early seventeenth century Ottoman Sufi, Ismā‘īl Anqarawī and his relationship with reformist currents in Ottoman Islam. Ottoman topics are paramount in the final section, “negotiations,” featuring articles which deal with Sufi social situations vis-à-vis power and authority. Side Emre offers a new reading of the history of Ibrāhīm-i Gulshanī (= Gülşenī), eponym of the Egyptian Gulshaniyya *ṭariqa*, and his interactions with both the Mamlūks and Ottomans. John Curry’s examination of the relationships between Murād III and three Sufi figures argues against simplistic or formulaic understandings of the dynamics generated between particular Sufis and the Ottoman court. Finally, Aslı Niyazioğlu’s article uses the presentation of Sufis’ dreams in Ṭāshkuprīzāda’s (= Taşköprizade) famous biographical dictionary as a site for analyzing larger issues of the perceptions, anxieties, and relationships between non-Sufi ‘*ulamā*’ and Sufi figures.

Despite some uneven material, this volume is on the whole quite useful, especially for readers interested in the history of Sufism in Ottoman lands, and, to a lesser extent, India, with a weighted tendency towards early modernity (though with little from the eighteenth century, it should be noted). Its coverage ideally would have extended further geographically and chronologically, drawing in, for instance, North Africa and Central Asia, both of which are curiously absent. The focus on the social situating of Sufism is of course a welcome contribution, with the most successful and useful of the articles in this collection being those that show the closest attention to socio-cultural situating in its fine-grained details. Thankfully, the importance of Sufism as a diverse, socially embedded phenomenon is being increasingly recognized and investigated by scholars, and not just for the formative or modern periods. This volume is one manifestation of that encouraging trend – let us hope that many more such manifestations appear in the years to come.

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