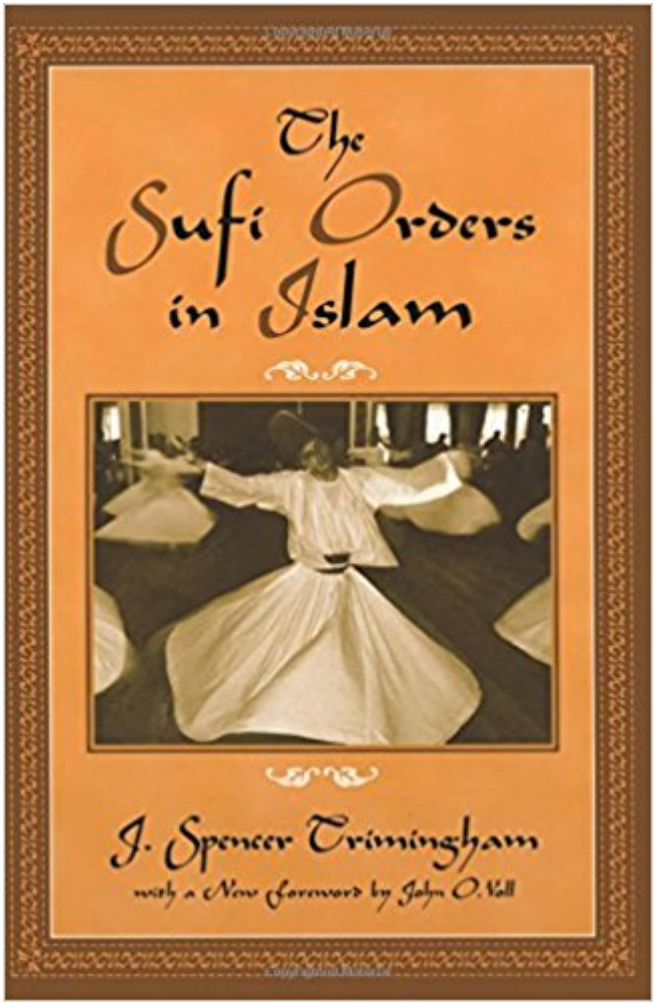
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The Sufi Orders In Islam



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Synopsis

Sufism, the name given to Islamic mysticism, has been the subject of many studies, but the orders through which the organizational aspect of the Sufi spirit was expressed has been neglected. The Sufi Orders in Islam is one of the earliest modern examinations of the historical development of Sufism and is considered a classic work in numerous sources of Islamic studies today. Here, author J. Spencer Trimingham offers a clear and detailed account of the formation and development of the Sufi schools and orders (tariqahs) from the second century of Islam until modern times. Trimingham focuses on the practical disciplines behind the mystical aspects of Sufism which initially attracted a Western audience. He shows how Sufism developed and changed, traces its relationship to the unfolding and spread of mystical ideas, and describes in sharp detail its rituals and ceremonial practices. Finally, he assesses the influence of these Sufi orders upon Islamic society in general. John O. Voll has added a new introduction to this classic text and provides readers with an updated list of further reading. The Sufi Orders in Islam will appeal not only to those already familiar with Triminghams groundbreaking research, but also to the growing reading public of Islamic studies and mysticism.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Praise for the previous edition:"An extremely useful general history of the Sufi orders...it fills a notable gap."--American Anthropologist

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through which the organizational aspect of the Sufi spirit was expressed have been neglected. Here, author J. Spencer Trimingham offers a clear and detailed account of the formation and development of the Sufi schools and orders (tariqas) from the second century of Islam until modern times. Trimingham focuses on the practical disciplines behind the mystical aspects of Sufism which initially attracted a Western audience. He shows how Sufism developed and changed, traces its relationship to the unfolding and spread of mystical ideas, and describes in sharp detail its rituals and ceremonial practices. Finally, he assesses the influence of these Sufi orders upon Islamic society in general.

This book is a very interesting book about a much misunderstood area of Islam. It is comprehensive in that it covers the intellectual aspects of Sufism as well as the organizational aspects. Many books are available that cover the teaching and beliefs of Sufis (the intellectual aspects) and still others cover the tariqas and different orders of Sufism (the organizational aspects) but Trimingham's text covers both aspects together in one volume. The reason for my 4 star rating is that the text is a very difficult read. It tends to jump around a bit and it incorporates a lot of Arabic terms that require the reader to bounce back and forth between the section they are reading and the glossary of Arabic terms. I guess one can look at this as a positive as well because it forces a better understanding of Arabic terms but it tends to make the reading slow.

This book almost set the standard. While there are many books of its kind in say Arabic or Turkish there are not many in English that cover a brief history of all of the major Sufi orders.The book details the history of Sufism, the early Sufis and then the establishment of the Sufi orders to the present day (or to be more exact the late 60s which it seems this is all the book goes up to)I would not say this book is difficult to read unless you know almost nothing concerning Sufism in which case A Schimmel Mystical Dimentions of Islam or one of the books of William Chittick or R.A Nicholson may be of more use to you.One slight problem though, there are a few errors in this book and very little covers Sufism in Turkey or the Ottoman Empire. There is some interesing passages concerning Sufism in Africa though which judging by his other works is his main field.

Much of this book, especially in the beginning, reads like a jargon-filled, complicated encyclopedia. Trimingham crams much information in here without successfully elaborating upon it or illustrating the points of highlights and importance. Only the patient, academic reader will come away with some real increased knowledge. If Trimingham is an expert on Sufism, he is not an expert in being

concise, simple or direct. So - if you're an expert you may give this book 3 or 4 stars for its comprehensive details - but you'll have to look past the jargony, technical, and cramped style in which it is written. Those interested in a simple or concise introduction to Sufism should look elsewhere.

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