

BOOK REVIEWS

Sufism in Central Asia: New Perspectives on Sufi Traditions, 15th-21st Centuries. Devin DeWeese and Jo-Ann Gross, eds. Leiden: Brill, 2018. 340 pp. (ISBN-13: 9789004367876)

Sufism in Central Asia is a collection of ten chapters which were presented at the conference on “Sufism and Islam in Central Asia” held at Princeton University on October 21-22, 2011. The chapters presented in this volume deal with various features of the history of Sufi groups in Central Asia with a wide historical scope covering the late Timurid period through to the modern era. According to the editors of this volume, Devin DeWeese and Jo-Ann Gross, the umbrella question uniting all of the articles has to do with the relationship between Sufism established in Central Asia before the Russian conquest and Sufi activities during the Tsarist, Soviet and post-Soviet periods.

This volume offers new approaches to and perspectives on the study of Sufism in Central Asia. Its important purpose is to correct the flaws of the Bennigsen School on the study of Sufism in Central Asia, which lacked historical comprehension of Sufi history in the region and ignored its complex nature. The importance of Sufi literature is two-fold: it is a window into social history, providing information overlooked in court histories and documents, and it provides essential information related to the religious life of a certain community. The editors maintain that only through thoroughly contextualized studies of Sufi sources can scholars understand these complex dimensions of Sufi history in Central Asia. However, the editors remind us to pay attention to the sources and structures of Sufi history in Central Asia, which differ considerably depending on the period. DeWeese and Gross suggest using an integrated approach in specialized studies of a particular Sufi figure and/or community as well as avoiding the application of blanket assumptions based on other figures and periods.

The volume consists of ten contributions that are organized according to chronology. The first, Devin DeWeese’s chapter, titled “Re-Envisioning the History of Sufi Communities in Central Asia: Continuity and Adaptation in Sources and Social Frameworks,” examines the flaws and consequences of the Bennigsen and Sovietological approach to the study of Sufism in Central Asia. DeWeese demonstrates the continuities between the Sufi communities active during the pre-Russian occupation of Central Asia and the post-Tsarist and Soviet periods. Shahzad Bashir’s chapter, “Naqshband’s Lives: Sufi Hagiography between Manuscripts and Genre,” offers theoretical and conceptual groundwork for the study of Sufi hagiography

as a source for social and religious history based on a body of hagiographic literature focused on Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband. Dividing the hagiographical sources into four categories (manuscripts, texts, narrative fund, and genre), Shahzad Bashir proposes interpretive possibilities along with a systematic approach for the advancement of the study of Sufi hagiographies as important sources to understand premodern Central Asia.

Maria Subtelny examines "The Works of Ḥusayn Vā'iz Kāshifī as a Source for the Study of Sufism in Late 15th and Early 16th Century Central Asia." Focusing on the Sufi influenced works of Ḥusayn Vā'iz Kāshifī, one of the important intellectual figures in the late Timurid period, Subtelny demonstrates how an in-depth study of an individual figure can help us understand the social history of Sufism. Waleed Ziad's study, "Ḥaẓrat Jīo Ṣāḥib: How Durrānī Peshawar Helped Revive Bukhara's Sanctity," demonstrates the extension and "revival" of Sufi networks from Peshawar to Bukhara during the 18th-19th centuries. The case of Ḥaẓrat Jīo Ṣāḥib shows the influence of Sufis on a wide range of groups in power, from tribal leaders to ruling elites, extending from Hindustan, Khurasan and Mawarannahr. Kawahara Yayoi's survey of the social, political and military legacy of "Valī Khān Tūra: A Makhdūmzāda Leader in Marghīnān during the Collapse of the Khanate of Khoqand" illustrates the activity of Valī Khān Tūra in the Ferghana Valley uprising at the beginning of Russian rule in Central Asia.

Robert McChesney in his "Reliquary Sufism: Sacred Fiber in Afghanistan" offers a detailed historical examination of the shrine of the Prophet's Cloak (*kbirqa-yi shariḥ*) located in Qandahar with a special focus on the period from 1880-1930. In addition to its history, McChesney explores the role of the shrine and its benefactors in the economic, social and religious aspects of the Afghan community. Drawing parallels between shrine culture and reliquary Sufism, he suggests that the shrine of the Prophet's Cloak is based on a model of the shrines of Sufi saints. Allen Frank's "Sufism in the Face of Twentieth-Century Reformist Critique: Three Responses from Sufi *Imāms* in the Volga-Ural Region" recounts the responses of three Sufi writers concerning the critique of certain Sufi practices. The writings of these Sufis illustrate how the reformist movement affected Sufism in addition to describing the religious and social changes that the Sufi communities went through in the early 20th century in the Volga-Ural region.

In his piece, Eren Tasar examines "Sufism on the Soviet Stage: Holy People and Places in Central Asia's Socio-Political Landscape after World War II," in which he provides a solid critique of the Bennigsen school based on examples of the hereditary Sufi families at the leadership of SADUM, the "Hairy Ishans," and the hereditary *kbhojas* at the holy spring Hazrat Ayub in the Ferghana Valley. Exploring the endurance and survival of the local Sufi communities during the Soviet period, with a special interest in the 1940-1950s, Eren Tasar challenges the old narratives about Sufism under Soviet rule. Ashirbek Muminov's study on "Sufi Groups in Contemporary Kazakhstan: Competition and Connections with Kazakh Islamic Society" surveys the currently active Sufi communities in modern Kazakhstan. Based on oral interviews, Muminov studies the established practices and ongoing activities of the major representatives of the four Sufi groups including the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiya-Ḥusayniyya, the Qādirīyya, the Jahriyya, and the various Turkish Sufi communities. Muminov observes the onset of the reformation of Sufi communities in today's Kazakhstan, which, he

anticipates, may facilitate further development of Sufi activity in the near future. The last of the contributions to this volume is Jo-Ann Gross' study on "The Biographical Tradition of Muḥammad Bashārā: Sanctification and Legitimation in Tajikistan." Exploring the correlation between Sufism and shrine culture, Gross examines two narrative traditions dedicated to an Islamizing saint Muḥammad Bashārā along with his shrine complex located in modern Tajikistan. The importance of the biographies of Muḥammad Bashārā, notes Gross, is that they demonstrate the discursive nature of Islam in Central Asia in addition to illustrating the ongoing process of Muslim identity formation.

The material presented in this volume offers a window into new perspectives on Sufi traditions active between the 15th and 21st centuries in Central Asia. This volume is a long-awaited contribution to the field of Sufi studies, which challenges the outdated, flawed assumptions and generalizations seeded by the Bennigsen School. *Sufism in Central Asia* surely starts a new phase in the study of Sufism in Central Asia.

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