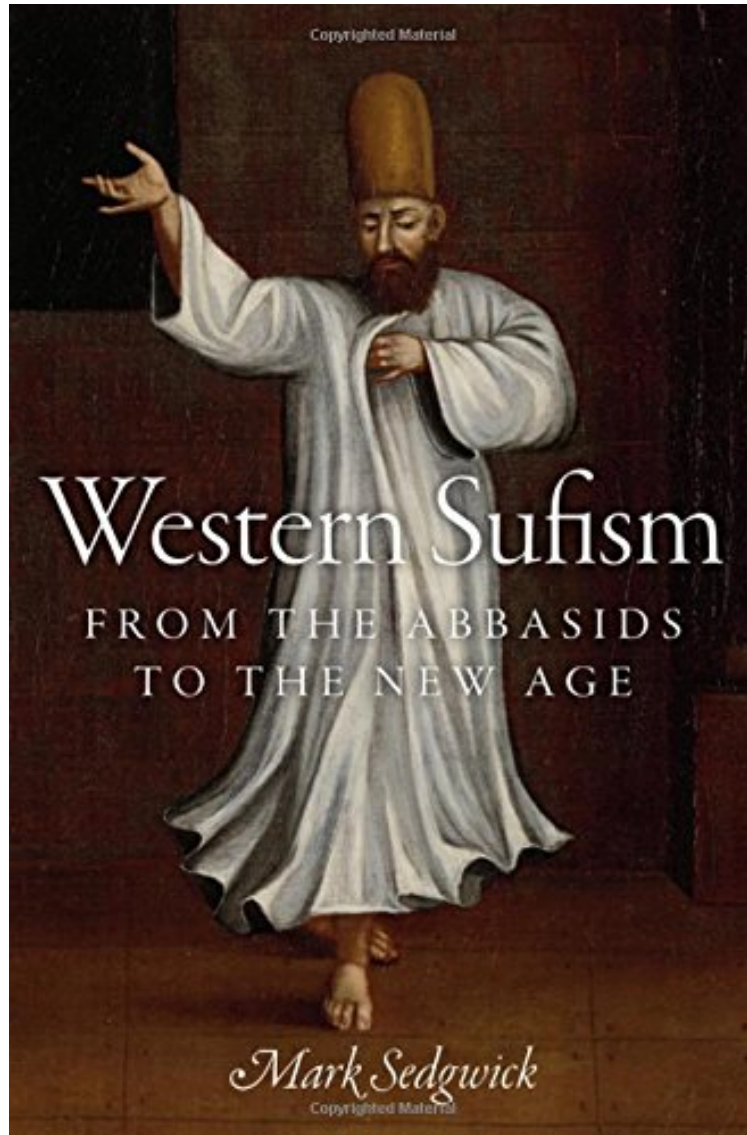


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Western Sufism: From the Abbasids to the New Age

Mark Sedgwick

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Mark Sedgwick : Western Sufism: From the Abbasids to the New Age before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Western Sufism: From the Abbasids to the New Age:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Highly recommended, fascinating study of Western SufismBy CustomerThe book offers the first comprehensive study of Sufism in the west. It traces the history of Sufism in the west from the 15th century to our days and offers a fascinating, large scale and thought provoking investigation of Western Sufism. The first part of the book deals with Neoplatonism and Emanationism in Islam, Christianity and

Judaism, the second part of the western imagining of Sufism between the 15-19 century, the third part with the establishment of Sufism in the west in the early 20th century, and the last part, with Sufism in the New Age. I read the book with great interest and enjoyment. The book, which is based on impressive thorough research and erudition is very well written, engaging and convincing. It fills a much needed lacuna in research, and will be of much interest to scholars and students of diverse areas - Neoplatonism, Sufism, Kabbalah, Christianity, Western Esotericism, New Age religiosity and more. Highly recommended. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A welcome and useful update to the history of Western Esotericism, and the role Islam and Sufism played in it. By K. Southall. A welcome and useful update to the history of Western Esotericism, and the role Islam and Sufism played in it. Professor Sedgwick's work on Western Sufism follows the wake of his *Against The Modern World*, but aims at a much broader field than the history of Traditionalist Perennialist Western Sufi movements. Rather, a real exploration of the history of Sufism, Sufic groups, individuals, and activities in the Western World (Europe and America) from High Abbasid Caliphate itself to the present day. Few historians have this sort of reach, command over the source materials, access to contemporary Sufi figures, or the organizational capacity to put such a thing together. Sedgwick apparently does. This is a book that someone needed to write, a long time ago. But perhaps it's best that no one tackled it until Sedgwick got to it. Over the years Sedgwick attracted some unfair criticism over his handling of the Traditionalist (Perennialist) movement and the Maryamiyya tariqa, because of material in *Against the Modern World*. But for me, as a reader with real sympathy toward the Traditionalists and Perennialists, something that consistently comes through is that Sedgwick is a careful, consummate, and fair researcher. He has done his homework in spades over the last couple of decades, and he is a careful and insightful historian. He displays great command over the sources, and doesn't appear to have an axe to grind. In fact, Sedgwick seems to have real respect toward Sufism and Sufis, Islam and Muslims. This book gathers a lot of material, and I can only imagine what must have been edited out for brevity. It opens up a gold mine of suggestive lines of further historical inquiry for students of the Western Esoteric Tradition and the New Age, Islamic Esotericism, Sufism specifically, as well as for students of the historical interactions of Western Christendom and the Dar al-Islam. Also interesting are lines that may connect to political and para-political themes that a careful student or researcher may further follow-up on. *Western Sufism: From the Abbasids to the New Age* is an immense contribution to the conversation on these topics, and I hope it becomes a standard University textbook in Comparative Religions and Islamic Studies. But it's well written enough that curious non specialists will find it useful in understanding the real, and fascinating, role that Sufis have played in Western History. 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. a mental feast for anyone with an interest in the diffusion of Sufism in the West. By Kenneth Johnson. This book is a mental feast for anyone with an interest in the diffusion of Sufism in the West. On subjects where I had a modest amount of knowledge, like Idries Shah, I found Sedgwick the fairest-minded commentator to date. It was most encouraging to see his judicious appraisal of Thomas Johnson and the Missouri Platonists, in whose world I am currently immersed. In the first half of the book, the review of neoplatonic and myriad other influences on Sufism is thorough and engaging. But my favorite parts of the book were the material almost completely new to me concerning the Sufi Order in the West and Meher Babas Sufism Reoriented.

Western Sufism is sometimes dismissed as a relatively recent "new age" phenomenon, but in this book Mark Sedgwick argues that it has deep roots, both in the Muslim world and in the West. In fact, although the first significant Western Sufi organization was not established until 1915, the first Western discussion of Sufism was printed in 1480, and Western interest in Sufi thought goes back to the thirteenth century. Sedgwick starts with the earliest origins of Western Sufism in late antique Neoplatonism and early Arab philosophy, and traces later origins in repeated intercultural transfers from the Muslim world to the West, in the thought of the European Renaissance and Enlightenment, and in the intellectual and religious ferment of the nineteenth century. He then follows the development of organized Sufism in the West from 1915 until 1968, the year in which the first Western Sufi order based on purely Islamic models was founded. Western Sufism shows the influence of these origins, of thought both familiar and less familiar: Neoplatonic emanationism, perennialism, pantheism, universalism, and esotericism. Western Sufism is the product not of the new age but of Islam, the ancient world, and centuries of Western religious and intellectual history. Using sources from antiquity to the internet, Sedgwick demonstrates that the phenomenon of Western Sufism draws on centuries of intercultural transfers and is part of a long-established relationship between Western thought and Islam.

"Topics seemingly familiar to the non-specialist Sufism as antinomian, pacifist, distinct from or older than Islam are critically examined in an extensive and diachronic presentation with appreciated nuance and accountability for variation and contradiction: herein lies Sedgwick's great achievement. Instructors may find chapters from these sections appropriate for undergraduates as well, since they pithily and engagingly illustrate the reception of 'Sufism' in epochs and milieus otherwise unexpected." --Reading Religion "The list of intellectuals who have sneered at twentieth-century Western Sufis as peddling some form of 'neo-Sufism' or 'New Age syncretism' is long and depressing. In his new book, Mark Sedgwick impressively corrects this consensus by giving us the long arc. He traces the Christian and

Jewish engagement with Sufism back to the fifteenth-century Renaissance, and then traces the mystical lingua franca of these transcultural transmissions even further back, through Arab and Scholastic philosophy and, finally, to the towering figure of Plotinus. Throughout it all, Sedgwick demonstrates an intellectual and spiritual generosity that is rare among scholars of this erudition and accomplishment. The implications are significant and far-reaching for any number of intellectual projects, from the histories of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism to the re-visioning of comparativism for a new generation." --Jeffrey J. Kripal, author of *The Serpent's Gift: Gnostic Reflections on the Study of Religion* "This is the book on Sufism that I always wanted to read, but that I just couldn't find because Mark Sedgwick had not yet written it. Is Sufism Islamic or universal? Is it a historical phenomenon or a product of the imagination? Does it come from the East or the West? Is it one thing or many things? As it turns out, the answer to all these questions is 'both' - and yet there is something that holds it all together: the Platonic dream of reunion with the One True Reality that is hidden and yet made visible by the veil of appearances." --Wouter J. Hanegraaff, Professor of History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents, University of Amsterdam "This work is both provocative and thought-provoking. Not only is it the first serious study of Sufism in the West but it also provides an argument for both Sufism and Islam as 'Western' spiritual traditions through the shared heritage of Neoplatonism. Besides providing important new material for scholars and students of Sufism, this book is also useful for both graduate and undergraduate courses on Sufism, Orientalism, Esotericism, and Religious Studies and Islamic Studies in general." -- Vincent J. Cornell, Asa Griggs Candler Professor of Middle East and Islamic Studies, Emory University About the Author Mark Sedgwick is the head of the Islamic Cultures and Societies Research Unit at Aarhus University in Denmark. As a historian, his work centers on the transfer of religions and traditions in the late pre-modern and modern periods.