

direct political command of the loose federation of cults and mystery religions in Islam that had lingered since the days of the early Sufis and Al-Ghazali.

Today, those cult networks are kept in place by the power of British and American intelligence, NATO, and the military power behind them. For instance, Iran: the Ayatollah Khomeini and thousands of mullahs that he commands—as many as 200,000, according to Iranian sources—represent an administrative command network that can mobilize a mass of chanting cultists at a moment's notice. But, standing behind Khomeini is the powerful apparatus of the former SAVAK, the Shah's secret police, many of whose top officials still command the secret police of Khomeini. Though apparently Islamic on the surface—which is a useful myth to mobilize the masses—underneath the Khomeini regime is a highly sophisticated, computerized military command center with direct lines to London and Washington.

The heresy of Sufism

The foundation for the Muslim Brotherhood is the cult of Sufism.

At the beginning, Islam was founded as a city-building, world historical force that emerged in response to a profound collapse of civilization in the Near East. Following the unification of the Arabian tribes in the 7th century by the Prophet Mohammed, a renaissance of trade and commerce flourished and entire cities rose up out of the rubble of the decadent Byzantine and Persian empires. Whole sciences were developed by Islamic scholars, and major contributions that revolutionized music, mathematics, and technology were made in the centuries that followed. Under the leadership of Mohammed, and then a series of political-philosophical movements such as the Mutasilites, the Ismailis, and others, a Neoplatonic humanist movement emerged to build one of the world's most magnificent civilizations. The enemy of that achievement was the land-owning oligarchy and their paid agents within the priesthood, who constantly sought to mobilize the backward peasantry against the city-builders.

The anti-urban, mystical cultists were called Sufis.

According even to Sufi sources, Sufism dates back to pre-Islamic times. According to Professor Margaret Smith of Cambridge University, in her *The Way of the Mystics: The Early Christian Mystics and the Rise of the Sufis*, published in 1978 by Oxford University Press, there is a "relationship between the rise and development of a mystical element in Islam—that which we know as Sufism—and the mysticism which was already to be found within the Christian Church of the Near and the Middle East at the time when the Arab power established itself." Professor Smith, until her death a leading British cult specialist, explains that Sufism is the direct heir not only

of Christian mysticism or "the true Gnostic," but also of the "mystery-cults of the Greeks."

Other scholars have shown conclusively that Christian gnosticism—as a cult heresy within the early Church—is itself derived directly from the Oriental cults and mystery religions of the ancient East. The definitive work on this subject is *The Gnostic Religion* by Hans Jonas, who asserts that when the humanist armies of Alexander the Great swept through the Near East and Persia the devil-worshipping cults were ruthlessly suppressed and forced "underground." They sought outlets in the Hellenistic world in the form of Delphic eruptions of pseudo-Platonic movements that were merely disguised cults. "For the East, it is a time of preparation for its reemergence, comparable to a period of incubation," writes Jonas. "The spiritual monopoly of Greece caused the growth of an invisible East whose secret life formed an antagonistic undercurrent beneath the surface of the public Hellenistic civilization."

Eventually, reports Jonas, the "Eastern underground" emerged in the form of the gnostic cult that

Jesuits praise 'Cult of Islam'

The following extracts are taken from Social Compass, the quarterly publication of Belgium's Louvain University. The university itself, run by the Society of Jesus, maintains a Center for Contemporary Arab Studies headed by Bishara Khader, whose brother is the PLO representative in Brussels. The extracts printed below are taken from Vol. 25, No. 3-4, 1978, a special issue of Social Compass devoted to Islam and Society.

The article quoted is by Jacques Waardenburg of Holland, entitled "Official and Popular Religion in Islam." In the article, Waardenburg describes how the influence of pre-Islamic cult rituals has affected the Muslim religion by giving rise to "mystical brotherhoods and Muslim 'brotherhoods' and societies." He asserts explicitly that it was al-Ghazali who legitimized such cultism, and he crows that the lack of an official institutional organization—like the Papacy—has made Islam easy to subvert. That, he hints, was accomplished by the "fundamentalist reforms" of the 19th and 20th century; that is, by Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani.

Ibn Taimiya (1263-1328 A.D.) combats what may be called "popular religion" among Muslims in his

“compounded everything—oriental mythologies, astrological doctrines, Iranian theology, elements of Jewish tradition, whether Biblical, rabbinical, or occult, Christian salvation-eschatology, Platonic terms and concepts.”

It is this eclectic religious tradition embodied in gnosticism that, after the foundation of Islam, resurfaced again in the form of Sufism. Modern Sufis pride themselves in the fact that many naive scholars have failed to identify the current out of which Sufism developed. In *The Sufis*, written by the Sufi Idris Shah, the author playfully cites the allegedly “undefinable” nature of Sufism:

According to one Persian scholar, Sufism is a Christian aberration. A professor at Oxford thinks that it is influenced by the Hindu Vedanta... An Arab-American professor speaks of it as a reaction against intellectualism in Islam. A professor of Semitic literature claims traces of Central Asian Shamanism.

And so on. How does Idris Shah define a Sufi? “A Sufi is a Sufi,” he writes.

But Idris Shah—himself a well-publicized fraud of some magnitude who is presently involved with the Muslim Brotherhood cult—cites Ishan Naiser, a Sufi, who then proceeds to identify the cult-like nature of Sufism as it spans all major religions:

I am the pagan; I worship at the altar of the Jew; I am the idol of the Yemenite, the actual temple of the fire-worshipper; the priest of the Magian; the inner reality of the cross-legged Brahmin meditating; the brush and the color of the artist; the suppressed, powerful personality of the scoffer. One does not supersede the other—when a flame is thrown into another flame they join at the point of “flameness.”

More to the point, Idris Shah elsewhere pinpoints the real nature of the Sufi cult. It is, he says correctly, a real synthesis of the mystical antirationalism of Al-Ghazali and the nominalist “realism” of the leading Muslim

time. He treats such popular religion as a kind of *id* (festival) in the widest sense of the word, at a time, in a place, or with a ritual which cannot be considered lawful according to the *shari'a* (religious law).

Like others before him, Ibn Taimiya explains the occurrence of such popular religion as borrowings from other religions than Islam, in particular from paganism as it existed before Islam in Arabia and elsewhere, and from Eastern Christianity with its rituals, feasts, and veneration of the saints... He is particularly vehement in his attacks on ideas and practices which had developed in Islam in connection with the belief in the intercession of one human being for another.

It is possible to classify the most striking *forms* of popular religion in the following way:

1. celebrations of *rites de passage*;
2. celebrations of the sequence of the seasons of nature and of the weeks, months, and years; ...
7. ways of life and ideas in explicitly religious groups (*tariqa's* or mystical brotherhoods, Muslim ‘brotherhoods’ and ‘societies.’); ...

Although such forms of popular Islam may sometimes constitute a sort of “underground” religion, in nearly all cases they have an important cultural and social structural function within the total life of the societies concerned...

The development of mysticism and the place of Sufi piety in Islam put the problem of popular Islam

in a wider framework. The origin of Sufism was quite “orthodox.” It started as the consistent application of religious norms contained in the Koran and the early *sunna*. By the end of the 12th century A.D., however, through the influence of al-Ghazali (1058-1111), it was incorporated, apart from the extreme mystical portions which were explicitly contradictory to official doctrine, within the mainstream of Islam...

We can even go further. From the point of view of history of religions it can be argued that historical Islam, as based on the specific faith of predicament of Mohammed and taking this as its ultimate norm, is largely a “popular” variant of more general religious notions which were current in the Near East in the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. ...

Many different kinds of popular Islam can grow and sometimes even proliferate... It was apparently the fundamentalist reforms, and in particular the reform movements of the 19th and 20th century, which intensified and rationalized, within the Islamic religion itself, the permanent tension between normative and popular Islam... It would seem that the interplay between the more or less fundamentalist reform movements, often supported by some *ulema*, on the one hand, with their call “back to true Islam!”, and the recapturing in due time by popular religion of its lost terrain on the others, with its appeal to satisfy certain religious needs, is one of the fundamental structures of this religion.