Conference on
Jewish Studies
CISMOR
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第８回：PROCEEDINGS

Kabbalah and Sufism
Esoteric Beliefs and Practices in Judaism and Islam in Modern Times

カバラーとスーフィズム：
現代におけるユダヤ教とイスラームの秘儀的信仰と実践

2015

February 28-March 1, 2015

同志社大学
Doshisha University
一神教学際研究センター
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CENTER FOR INTERDICIPLINARY STUDY OF MONOTHEISTIC RELIGIONS (CISMOR)
THE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
DOSHISHA UNIVERSITY

第 8 回CISMORユダヤ学会議
The 8th CISMOR Annual Conference on Jewish Studies

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表紙：踊るデルヴィーシュとカバラーの象徴「生命の樹―10 のスフィロット」
COVER : The Kabbalah symbol of “Tree of Life – the Ten *Sefirot*” on the background of dancing whirling Dervishes.

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Preface

The Eighth CISMOR Annual Conference on Jewish Studies was held this year in the midst of Kyoto's cold winter, from February 28 to March 1, 2015. As in previous years, this time too we had the honor of welcoming to Doshisha University distinguished scholars from abroad, but a special opportunity was also given to young Japanese scholars to introduce their work and receive valuable comments and advice from our eminent guests and their local colleagues.

The focus of this year's conference was on aspects of mystical thought and practice in both Judaism and Islam. Following the tradition established in our previous CISMOR conferences on Jewish Studies, we strived to present various religious traditions side by side and examine their mutual reflections. The lectures presented by the young scholars widened the scope further through examining various other aspects of religious thought throughout the ages.

The public lecture and workshop on the first day of the conference focused on the modern and contemporary manifestations and scholarship of Jewish Kabbalah. Prof. Boaz Huss of Ben-Gurion University first delivered a public lecture in which he expounded on the history of Kabbalah and then focused on its contemporary manifestations, following a new surge of interest in it evident since the late 20th century; he emphasized the surprisingly innovative aspects of this surge, such as exotericism, practicality and New Age spirit. In his workshop paper Prof. Huss argued against the very use in regard to Kabbalah and Hasidism of the term "Mysticism", which he regards as a "modern, culturally-dependent, discursive construction". According to him, this practice involves theological and orientalist assumptions, and disregards historical, social and political considerations. His paper was followed by a response from Dr. Doron B. Cohen (included in this volume) and a discussion.

The second day offered a public lecture and a workshop focusing on some aspects of Neo-Sufism. In his public lecture Prof. Mark Sedgwick of Aarhus University introduced classic Islamic Sufism, before focusing on some of the phenomena of Neo-Sufism. He too elaborated on the use of the term "Mysticism" and its applicability to Sufism. In his workshop paper Prof. Sedgwick reviewed the career of Idries Shah, a prominent popular writer on Sufism and related ideas, against the background of Neo-Sufism in the 1960's. He also elaborated on Shah's relations with some leading authors of the time who promoted his work. This was followed by a response from Prof. Teruaki Moriyama (included in this volume) and a discussion.

The earlier workshop on the second day was dedicated to the presentations by young scholars (a postdoctoral fellow and three PhD candidates) on four different religious issues, including points of contact between Judaism and Christianity on the one hand, and Islam on the other. Mr. Hajime Yamamoto turned to the ancient world and expanded on the means of communication between the

kings of the Hittite empire and their gods, hinting at possible relevance to the Bible. Mr. Koji Osawa looked at Jewish-Christian relations in Late Antiquity by comparing interpretations from rabbinic literature and Syriac Christianity of the episode of the "Golden Calf" in Exodus 32, exposing points of contact and conflict. Ms. Aiko Kanda expounded on the conditions for attaining true knowledge of God according to the final chapters of Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* and in relation to his other writings. Finally, Dr. Shinichi Yamamoto offered a comparative analysis of the notion of "World Cycles" in Kabbalistic and Ismā'īlī literature, suggesting some intriguing ramifications to historical messianism in both Judaism and Islam. Each paper was followed by a short comment (not included in this volume) and a discussion.

*

As in the previous seventh conference, this year too all papers and comments were delivered in English, with no papers or comments presented in Japanese. All the papers and main responses delivered at the conference are therefore presented here in English, after having been edited for publication by their respective authors.

We wish to express our sincere thanks to all the participants and to those who helped in the organization of the conference and the production of this volume. We are especially grateful to the CISMOR staff for their constant dedication.

We wish and hope to be able to keep up the tradition of annual CISMOR conferences on Jewish Studies in the years to come.

Ada Taggar-Cohen, Etsuko Katsumata, Doron B. Cohen
Editors
Kyoto, October 2015

巻頭言

第 8 回 CISMOR ユダヤ学会議は、2 月 28 日から 3 月 1 日にかけて、京都の厳しい冬の最中に開催された。これまでと同じく海外から著名な研究者を光栄にも同志社大学に迎えることができたが、今回は、日本の若手研究者に彼らの研究を発表し、優れたゲストと同僚から貴重なコメントを受ける特別な機会にもなった。

本年の本会議の焦点は、ユダヤ教とイスラーム双方における神秘主義思想とその実践の諸側面についてである。これまでの CISMOR ユダヤ学会議の伝統に倣って、我々は様々な宗教伝統を互いに比較しそれらの相互の影響を検証しようと努めた。若手研究者の発表は、時代を通じた宗教思想の様々な側面の検証を通して更に視座を拡大した。

初日の公開講演と研究会は、ユダヤ･カバラーの現代、同時代における兆候とカバラー学に焦点が当てられた。まず、ベン・グリオン大学ボアズ・フス教授が、カバラーの歴史を解説し、同時代の兆候に焦点を当て、20 世紀後代以降明らかになった新しい関心の潮流を追った。彼が強調するのは、秘教性、実践性、そしてニューエージの精神性など、この潮流における驚くべき革命的側面である。研究会では、フス教授は、カバラーとハスィデイズムに対して、彼が「現代の文化的に依存したとりとめのない」用語とみなす「神秘主義」を使用すること自体に対して異議を呈した。彼によれば、ここには、神学的なまたオリエンタリズム的な仮定があり、歴史的社会的政治的考察を無視している。彼の論考に対して、Dr. ドロン・B・コヘンのレスポンス（本巻に収録）があり、議論が続いた。

2 日目は、ネオ・スーフィズムの諸側面に焦点を当てた公開講演会と研究会が開かれた。オーフス大学のマーク･セジウィック教授の公開講演会では､イスラームの古典スーフィズムが紹介された上で、ネオ・スーフィズムのいくつかの現象に焦点が当てられた。彼も「神秘主義」という用語の使い方とそれをスーフィズムに適用することについて詳細に論じた。セジュウィック教授の研究会では、卓越した人気を誇るスーフィズム作家イドリース・シャーの経歴と 1960 年代のネオ・スーフィズムの背景に逆らう関連する理念について、論評した。また、シャーと、彼の作品を促したその時代を牽引した作家数名との関係を詳細に論じた。続いて森山央朗准教授からのレスポンス（本巻に収録）があり、議論が続いた。

2 日目の午前中の研究会では、4 人の若い研究者（博士研究員 1 名と博士号論文提出資格者 3 名）が、各々の宗教的論題について発表した。そこには、ユダヤ教とキリスト教、ユダヤ教とイスラームの接触も含まれた。山本孟氏は、古代世界に目を向け、ヒッタイト王国の王と彼らの神々とのコミュニケーションの手段について論じ、聖書に対す

る可能な関係性を示唆した。大澤耕史氏は、出エジプト記 32 章「金の子牛」のエピソードに対するラビ文献とシリア・キリスト教徒の解釈を比較し、接点と対立点を挙げながら、古代におけるユダヤ－キリスト教の関係を論じた。神田愛子氏は、真の神の知識を獲得するための条件をマイモニデスの『迷えるものへの手引き』の最終章と彼の他の著作との関係の中から論じた。最後に山本伸一博士は、カバラーとイスマイール派における「世界周期」の概念を比較分析し、ユダヤ教徒イスラームにおける史的メシアニズムについての興味深い分岐点を示唆した。それぞれの発表には短いコメント（本巻には収録されていない）と議論が続いた。

前回の第 7 回の会議と同様、今回もすべての発表とコメントは英語でなされており、日本語での発表、コメントはない。よって、本巻においても、論文、コメントは、それぞれの著者による編集を経た上で、すべて英語で収録している。

参加者全員と会議の運営、本巻の作成に携わってくださった方々すべてに感謝したい。特に、CISMOR スタッフにはその絶えざる献身に特に感謝したい。

来年も、CISMRO ユダヤ学会議の伝統を維持できることを心から願う次第である。

編者

アダ タガー・コヘン、勝又悦子、ドロン・B・コヘン

2015 年 10 月、京都にて

第 8 回 CISMOR ユダヤ学会議
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Part I

Jewish Mysticism

Kabbalah and its Contemporary Revival

Boaz Huss

Kabbalah, a word whose meaning in Hebrew is "reception", or "something received", is a Jewish tradition that emerged in the late medieval period, became central in Jewish cultures in the early modern period, and had a considerable impact on non-Jewish European culture. The central place of Kabbalah diminished in the modern period, and by the middle of the 20th century, only very small circles studied and practiced Kabbalah. Yet, since the 1980's, a very significant revival of Kabbalah has occurred. Today, there is much interest in Kabbalah, and many Kabbalistic groups are active in Israel, the United States, and Europe.

In this essay, I would like to offer a short survey of Kabbalah and its history, and to focus on its contemporary revival. Following a brief discussion of Kabbalah and its place in Jewish culture, I will present some of the major contemporary Kabbalistic movements, and discuss the main characteristics of contemporary Kabbalah. I will suggest that the contemporary forms of Kabbalah emerged and were shaped in the context of New Age and Postmodern culture.

Since the late 12th century, several traditions, texts and practices were perceived and transmitted as part of an ancient, Jewish esoteric tradition, called "Kabbalah". These texts and practices include a large variety of themes. I will discuss only a few of the more prevalent and central ones.

A major component of most Kabbalistic doctrines (and I should emphasize that there is a large variety of different Kabbalistic doctrines and movements), which scholars refer to as "theosophy", is the theory of the "sefirot" (a word in Hebrew that originally meant "numbers"). According to Kabbalistic doctrines the divine world is comprised of ten sefirot. These are divine attributes, or emanations of God, which are also described as part of the human-like form of God, and include masculine and feminine components. The sefirot are portrayed as a dynamic system, and the dynamics between the sefirot, especially between the male and female sefirot, affect our world. When there are harmonious relations between the sefirot, harmony is found in the world. When the sefirot are separated and in conflict with each other, chaos and suffering reigns.

A second related Kabbalistic idea, which scholars refer to as "theurgy" is that human beings can influence (positively or negatively) the dynamics between the sefirot and the condition of the divine system. Negative human behavior (i.e., moral and religious transgressions), damage the harmony of the divine world, distance the sefirot from each other, and thus bring chaos, suffering, and pain to our

world, and especially to the Jewish people. Proper moral and religious conduct, on the other hand, restores harmony to the divine world, brings the sefirot closer to each other and repairs the damage in the divine system. The Hebrew word for this is "tikkun" - repair.

The primary goal of human beings (first and foremost of Jewish adult males) is to repair the divine world, and thus redeem our world. The way to do this is to strictly follow the Jewish religious precepts and ritual conduct. From this point of view, Kabbalah can be regarded as a conservative ideology whose main role was to justify, preserve and enhance the observance of Jewish religious law, the "Halacha". Most late medieval and early modern forms of Kabbalah accepted these ideas, and hence they are referred to by scholars as Theosphical-Theurgical Kabbalah.

Another trend of early Kabbalah, which developed in the late 13th century, also in Spain, is the "Prophetic Kabbalah". This type of Kabbalah, which was much influenced by medieval Jewish Philosophy, and probably also by Sufism, is much less interested in theosophy and theurgy. Rather, its main interest is practicing techniques for uniting with the divine intellect and attaining prophecy. The techniques for attaining prophecy are comprised mostly of combining and reciting Hebrew letters and divine names.

Apart from these major themes of Kabbalah, there are many other Kabbalitsic doctrines and practices. These include theories concerning the structure of the human soul, belief in re-incarnation, practices of saint veneration, exorcism of evil spirits, writing of amulets and magical use of divine names (some of these practices are called practical Kabbalah).

I would like to turn now to a short survey of the history of Kabbalah.

The first Kabbalistic circles appeared in the south of France, and later, in Spain, in the late 12th and early 13th centuries. The source and origins of Kabbalah are debated by scholars. Some scholars believe that the origins of Kabbalah lie in Gnostic circles, while others regard it as a new elaboration of earlier Jewish ideas from the Talmudic period. Scholars also observed the influence of Neoplatonism on Kabbalah, and some suggested Christian influences.

In the 13th century several Kabbalistic circles were active in Spain. At the end of this century, the Zohar was written. This is a collection of texts, mostly theosophical-theurgical homilies on the Torah, which was attributed to the second century sage Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. Eventually, this text was canonized and became the most authoritative and venerated book of Kabbalah.

In the second part of the 13th century, Rabbi Abraham Abulafia established the school of prophetic Kabbalah, which was mentioned before. Although Abraham Abulafia was criticized and rejected by other Kabbalists, his form of Kabbalah had a considerable influence on later Kabbalistic schools.

After the expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492, Kabbalah spread to other Jewish centers to which

the Spanish exiles arrived: Italy, North Africa, and the Ottoman Empire, including the land of Israel. Several centers of Kabbalah were created in that period. The most prominent one was in Safed, in the upper Galilee. It was there that Rabbi Isaac Luria, who became known as Ha-Ari, developed an innovative theosophical-theurgical Kabbalistic system, known as Lurianic Kabbalah, which became the most authoritative and influential Kabbalstic system in later periods. During the same period, in Europe, first in Italy, and later in other centers, Christian thinkers began to be interested in Kabbalah and to develop a Christian form of Kabbalah. Christian Kabbalah was based on Jewish Kabbalistic concepts, yet differed very much from Jewish forms of Kabbalah. The first Christian Kabbalist was the famous Renaissance scholar, Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494). According to the Christian Kabbalists, Kabbalah was an ancient Jewish doctrine that proved the truths of Christianity, and could be used in order to convince the Jews to convert to Christianity.

During the 17th-18th centuries, Kabbalah was dispersed to many Jewish communities around the world, and became prevalent in the large Jewish centers in Eastern Europe. During that period, Kabbalah became known to larger sectors of the Jewish population and spread beyond the elite intellectual circles that had studied and practiced Kabbalah in earlier periods. By the middle of the 18th century Kabbalah had become accepted by all communities in the Jewish world. It became the normative theology of Judaism, and integrated into Jewish ritual and prayer. The Zohar became part of the Jewish canon, and Lurianic Kabbala was accepted as the most authoritative Kabbalistic doctrine.

During the 18th century, three major schools and movements, based on the Kabbalah, were developed. The most famous and influential of these movements was the Hasidic movement, which was founded in Eastern Europe, by Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer, known as the Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760). The movement founded by him spread in the late 18th and 19th centuries and became very successful. During this period, different Hasidic schools and dynasties developed, many of them still active today.

Another school of Kabbala developed in the late 18th century in Lithuania. The school was founded by the most prominent Halachic authority in that period, Rabbi Eliyahu ben Shlomo, known as the Vilna Gaon (1720-1797), who was a fierce opponent of the Hasidic movement. His followers are still known today as Lithuanians, or as “The Opponents” (Mitnagdim). A third school of Kabbalah was developed at that time in the middle East, by a Kabbalist from Yemen, Rabbi Shalom Sharabi (1720-1777), who stood at the head of the Beth-El Kabbalistic Yehsiva in Jerusalem. This school became the most influential Kabbalistic school in the middle East.

All of these schools accepted the authority of the Zohar and of Lurianic Kabbalah. Yet, each of

them emphasized different aspects in their doctrines and practices. The Hssidic movement integrated Kabbalistic ideas and practices in their daily lives, and advocated a popular approach to the Kabbalah. They offered a psychological understanding of Kabbalah, which concentrated on human emotions and experiences. The Hasidic movement was divided into different groups, each of them following a different charismatic rabbi, a Zadik (righteous one) who was perceived as a conduit between the community and the divine world.

The disciples of the Vilna Gaon, the Lituanians or "Opponents", developed a very different form of Kabbalah. They held an esoteric and elitist approach to Kabbalah. It was studied by only a few, advanced students, and did not become part of the daily life of the followers of this school, although it was integrated with their ethical teaching.

The Kabbalah of the followers of Rabbi Sharabi and the Beth El Yeshiva was also elitist and esoteric. This school developed a scholastic study of the Lurianic writings, as well as a special form of meditative prayer, in which the Kabbalists concentrated on divine names and letter combinations.

During the same period in which the three above mentioned Kabbalah-based schools were established, another Jewish movement emerged in western Europe – the Jewish enlightenment movement, the Haskalah. Its founding figure was the Jewish-German philosopher, Moshe Mendelsohn (1729-1786). The Haskalah movement adopted the values of the European enlightenment movement, and aspired to reform Jewish culture according to those values. In the context of this endeavor, the Maskilim rejected Kabbalah and Hasidism, which they regarded as the main obstacle to Jewish integration within modern European culture.

The Haskalah movement had a decisive influence on modern Jewish culture. Most modern Jewish movements of the 19th and 20th century emerged from the Haskala and adopted its values – these movement include the reform, conservative and modern orthodox Jewish movements, as well as the secular socialist and national Jewish movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

All Jewish sectors that adopted the western-European, modern, enlightened ideals and values rejected the authority and sanctity of the Kabbalah. Hence, knowledge and practice of Kabbalah almost completely disappeared from the modern Jewish cultural systems of the liberal orthodox, reform, conservative, secular and national Jewish movements. On the other hand, Kabbalah was studied, practiced and perceived as sacred and authoritative in Jewish communities that rejected, or were less exposed to the values of European enlightenment and the Jewish Haskalah. Kabbalah preserved its central place in the culture of Hasidic and Lithuanian communities in Eastern Europe, and remained central in the Jewish communities in the Middle East and in North Africa. Thus, a very distinct divide existed in modern Jewish cultures regarding the Kabbalah. While in some Jewish

communities, especially in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, Kabbalah was practiced, studied and venerated, in other communities, especially in Western Europe and the United States, Kabbalah was ignored and rejected.

Although Kabbalah came to be perceived as fundamentally opposed to modern ideas and values, there were some attempts, in the early 20th century, to create modern forms of Kabbalah, and to integrate Kabbalistic ideas with modern European ideologies. One of the most interesting attempts at such integration was by Rabbi Yehuda Ashalag (1885-1954), a Kabbalist from Poland, who immigrated to Palestine in the 1920's. Ashlag created a new Kabbalistic doctrine, which combined Lurianic Kabbalah with communist and socialist ideas. According to Ashlag, human perfection is the transformation of human egoism to divine-like altruism. This can be achieved only in a communist Kabbalistic community. As we shall see later, some of the most prominent contemporary Kabbalistic movements emerged out of Ashlag's Kabbalistic movement.

Another prominent Rabbi who integrated in his thought Kabbalistic ideas and modern ideology, was Rabbi Isaac Ha-Cohen Kook (1865-1935). Rabbi Kook, who immigrated to Palestine from Latvia in 1904, and eventually became the chief Rabbi of the land of Israel, formed a modern Jewish national-religious ideology, which was influenced by modern European philosophy and by the Kabbalah. Kook became the main ideologist of the Israeli national-religious movement, and later, of the right-wing, settler movement, Gush-Emunim.

Renewed interest in Kabbalah emerged at the time in some modern Jewish circles, which adopted neo-romantic and national ideas. These scholars, the most famous amongst them were Martin Buber (1878-1965) and Gershom Scholem (1897-1982), came from a Jewish enlightened background. Although they did not practice Kabbalah and did not accept its doctrines as sacred and authoritative, they did not reject or disparage Kabbalah. On the contrary, they valued Kabbalah and Hasidism, identified them as forms of Jewish mysticism, and regarded them as vital powers in the history of the Jewish Nation.

Before turning to examine contemporary Kabbalah, I would like to mention that modern forms of Kabbalah were also created in the late 19th and early 20th centuries within non-Jewish, esoteric circles in Europe and the United States. The occult Kabbalah that was created in these circles was based mostly on Christian-Kabbalistic sources. Yet, in contrast to earlier Christian Kabbalists, the occultists who were interested in Kabbalah (such as Eliphas Levi, Papus, Madame Blavatsky, and members of the Golden Dawn), did not regard Kabbalah as carrying a Christological message. Rather they regarded Kabbalah as a universal occult-magical system.

I would like to turn know to the contemporary revival of Kabbalah. Notwithstanding the important

role Kabbalah still played in Jewish communities in Eastern Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, and the attempts to create modern forms of Kabbalah in Europe and the land of Israel in early 20th century, Kabbalah and Hasidism became peripheral in most forms of Jewish culture, especially after World War Two, and the foundation of the State of Israel. The destruction of Jewish communities in Eastern Europe, the immigration of Jewish communities from Arab countries, and the dominance of secular socialist ideology in Israel all contributed to the marginalization of Kabbalah and Hasidisim. Indeed, until the late 20th century, it seemed that Kabbalah was disappearing from the Jewish cultural scene.

Yet, and in quite a dramatic way, renewed interest in Kabbalah and Hasidism emerged in the late 20th century, and is still growing, in Israel, in Jewish communities around the world, and in global western culture. The renewal of Kabbalah and Hasidism comes in a variety of forms, and in different sectors. Today, there are hundreds of different Kabbalistic and Hasidic movements, people study different forms of Kabbala, turn to charismatic Kabbalists for advice and healing, and practice a variety of traditional and innovative Kabbalistic rituals. Furthermore, Kabbalistic themes are integrated in high and popular culture, including literature, cinema, pop music and the arts. As there is such a large variety of contemporary forms of Kabbalah and Hasidism. I will mention only a few of them.

Since the 1980's there has been a revival and reconstruction of North-African Kabbalistic saint veneration. Today, there are several contemporary Kabbalists of North African origin, who are perceived as having supernatural powers. Many people, not only of North African decent, turn to these Kabbalists for advice and blessing, and participate in rituals organized by them. Amongst the followers of these Kabbalists are prominent Israeli business tycoons and leading politicians. One of the most prominent contemporary Kabbalists of this type is Baruch Abuhaziera (b. 1941), known as Baba Baruch, the son of the most venerated 20th century North-African Jewish Saint, Israel Abuhazeira, the Baba Sali (1889-1984). The Baba Baruch has many admirers, and the grave of his father in the southern development town Netivot, is a location for an annual pilgrimage.

Another famous contemporary Kabbalist of North African descent is Rabbi Yaakov Ifargan (b.1964) who in known as Ha-Rentgen, the x-ray, due to his diagnostic and healing powers. Ha-Rentgen has many followers, who consult with him, and participate in the midnight Kabbalistic ceremonies he conducts near the gravesite of his father (also buried in Netivot).

Other Kabbalists who became prominent in Israeli public at the end of the 20th century emerged from the world of the early 20th century Kabbalistic schools in Jerusalem, who followed the Kabbalistic system and practices of Rabbi Shalom Sharabi. The most prominent Kabbalist of this circle was

Rabbi Isaac Kaduri. (~1898-2006). Originally from Bagdad, he was already past his 80th birthday when his name spread in Israel as a powerful kabbalist. Kaduri, whose expertise was writing amulets, gained considerable influence in Israeli politics, and his amulets were used as part of the Sephardi ultraorthodox party *Shas* election campaigns. Kaduri was more than a hundred years old when he died. His funeral was one of the biggest in Israel, attended by the president and prime minister of the state of Israel.

Another, younger Kabbalist of this school is Rabbi David Basri (b. 1941), who stands at the head of a Kabbalistic Yeshiva Ha-Shalom in Jerusalem. Basri, also of Jewish Iraqi decent, became known in the late 1990's, as an expert in Lurianic Kabbalistic rituals. In 1999, he performed a public ritual, in which he exorcised a dead spirit (Dybuk). Such exorcisms, which have been prevalent in Jewish culture since the 16th century, almost completely disappeared in the 20th century, before their revival by Basri. A few years ago Basri attempted another exorcism. This time, the possessed youth resided in Brasil, and Basri conducted the exorcism ceremony through Skype.

Apart from the revival of North African Kabbalah, and the revival of Kabbalists of the Shalom Sharabi school, there is a significant revival of neo-Hasidic groups. The most prominent and visible of the contemporary Hasidic movements is the Habad movement, which began, already in the 1950's, to be very active in the United States and Israel, under the leadership of the Habad Rebbe, Menahem Mendel Shneorson, known as the Lubavitcher Rebbe. One of the major aims of the Habad movement was to hasten the coming of the Messiah. Since the 1990's many of the Habad Hasidim identified their aging Rabbi as the Messiah, and even today, after his death, they publicly declare him Messiah and await his return.

Another very active and visible neo-Hasidic movement (actually, movements), are the Breslov Hasidim, who follow the teaching, and believe in the almost divine status, of the early 19th century Hasidic Rabbi Nachman of Breslov. Breslov Hasidism, which almost disappeared in the early 20th century, is very popular today, and attracts many followers. Breslov Hasidim are very visible in the Israeli public arena. They dance and sing in the streets, and graffiti carrying the name of Rabbi Nachman can be seen everywhere in Israel. Thousands of Breslov Hasidim participate in the annual pilgrimage to the grave of Rabbi Nachman in Uman, in the Ukraine.

Other contemporary movements today are based on the teaching of the communist Kabbalist, Rabbi Yehuda Ashalg. The largest contemporary neo-Kabbalah movement today, The Kabbalah Center, was founded in the 1960's in the United States, by a follower of Ashlag's Kabbalah, Rabbi Philip Berg. In the 1990's, the Kabbalah Center became an international movement, with branches in Israel, the United States, South America, and Europe. The Kabbalah Center integrates many New

Age motifs into its teaching and in contrast to all the other contemporary Kabbalah movements that I mentioned previously, it caters not only to Jews, but presents Kabbalah as a universal wisdom tradition that is open to anyone who is interested in studying and practicing it. In the 1990's several pop celebrities joined the Kabbalah Center, most famous amongst them Madonna.

Another growing neo-Kabbalah movement, which is also based on the teaching of Rabbi Ashlag, is Bnei Baruch, headed by Michael Laitman. Laitman, who immigrated from Russia to Israel in the 1970's, studied at the Kabbalah Center, and later with the son of Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag, Rabbi Baruch Ashlag. In the 1990's Laitman established the Bnei Baruch movement, whose center is in Israel, but which has branches all over the world. It is especially successful in Russian commonwealth countries. Similar to the Kabbalah Center, Bnei Baruch claims that Kabbalah is universal, and has many non-Jews amongst its members.

There are many other groups and individuals who are interested in, or practice various forms of Kabbalah. But I would like to turn now and examine the characteristics of contemporary Kabbalah, and the reasons for the resurgence of Kabbalah from the late 20th century.

First, it is important to notice the great variety of contemporary Kabbalistic and Hasidic groups, and the differences between them. Indeed, this great variety can be seen as one of the characteristics of contemporary Kabbalah. Never before in history has such a large variety of Kabbalistic and Hasidic movements existed. Another characteristic is the eclecticism, syncretism, and hybridity of contemporary Kabbalah. Although many of the groups originated in a specific school of Kabbalah, most contemporary Kabbalistic movements integrate themes and practices from other Kabbalistic traditions, as well as from other traditions and cultures, including contemporary pop culture. The hybridity of contemporary Kabbalah is also reflected in the social composition of most movements, which include amongst their members people from a variety of ethnic, religious, national and social backgrounds

Contemporary Kabbalah and Hasidism adopt many themes and practices from previous forms of Kabbalah. They teach about the sefirot, venerate the Zohar, and regard Lurianic Kabbalah as sacred and authoritative. Yet, the emphasis in contemporary Kabbalah is very different to that of earlier forms of Kabbalah. Theosphical and theurgical elements exist in contemporary Kabbalah, but they are downplayed in most movements. Instead, most contemporary Kabbalistic movements emphasize the psychological elements in Kabbalah and promote Kabbalah as contributing to individual spiritual well-being. Also, although many contemporary Kabbalists today observe Jewish religious law, many neo-Kabbalistic movements do not present Kabbalah as essentially connected to Jewish law, and as I have mentioned, some of them are open to non-Jews.

Another interesting feature of contemporary Kabbalah is its emphasis on the more practical aspects of Kabbalah. Kabbalists today are less interested in the "grand narratives" of the Kabbalah, in its myths and elaborated theology. Instead of studying, interpreting and developing new theories, Kabbalah followers today are interested in the healing power of Kabbalah, in the charismatic powers of Kabbalistic saints, in meditation techniques, and in using Kabbalah for personal well-being and spiritual growth.

Another interesting characteristic of contemporary Kabbalah – possibly the most striking in comparison with earlier Kabbalah – is its exoteric, rather than esoteric nature. Until the second half of the 20th century Kabbalah was usually regarded as esoteric, highly secretive knowledge whose study was limited mostly to Jewish males with comprehensive Jewish education. Today, almost all Kabbalistic movements, including the ultra-orthodox ones, present Kabbalah as open knowledge, approve of the dissemination of Kabbalah to the larger public, and allow it to be taught to non-observant Jews, to women, and to gentiles.

Another characteristic of contemporary Kabbala is its commodification. Although Kabbala, like any other cultural system, always had its economic and commercial aspects, today the commercial side of Kabbalah is much more visible. Kabbalah today is integrated into the capitalistic system and it is produced, advertised and sold in similar ways to other material and cultural products.

Finally, I would like to observe the New Age character of many of the contemporary Kabbalistic and Hasidic groups. Many of the groups I have mentioned adopt and integrate New Age themes and practices, such as the belief in the dawning of the new age, belief in self spirituality, meditation techniques, alternative medicine, Yoga and martial arts. Furthermore many of the characteristics of contemporary Kabbalah that I have enumerated above also characterize New Age culture. Eclecticism and syncretism, emphasis on healing and spiritual practices (and less on doctrines and beliefs), the psychologization of religious traditions, and the co-modification of spirituality, characterize New Age culture, as they do contemporary Kabbalah. From this perspective, I believe that the emergence of the new age of Kabbalah indeed should be understood in the context of the emergence of New Age culture.

Before concluding, I would like to address the question of the social, historical, and cultural factors and contexts which enabled the reemergence of Kabbalah in the later 20th century, and shaped its new formations. As I said, contemporary Kabbalah emerged in the context, and more or less at the same period, in which New Age culture emerged in the western world and became a global phenomenon. I would like to suggest that the emergence of new forms of Kabbalah, as well as of New Age Movements, should be understood within the framework of postmodern culture. Both the emergence

of New Kabbalah, as well as other New Age phenomena (such as for instance western Yoga, western forms of Buddhism, or Neo-Sufism), can be seen as related to the weakening of the grand narratives of western modernity, and the interest in alternative spiritual cultures, which were marginalized or ignored by the dominant ideologies of western modernity. In the Israeli case, interest in Kabbalah, which was marginalized and disparaged by modern western Jewish movements, emerged due to the decline of the hegemony of the Zionist and secular-socialist ideology in the 1970's and the growing cultural power of marginalized sectors in Israeli society.

Furthermore, I would like to suggest that many of the characteristics of contemporary Kabbalah can be seen as expressions of postmodern cultural logic. Thus, for instance, the hybrid and eclectic nature of contemporary Kabbalah can be seen as an expression of the hybrid and eclectic nature of postmodernity, whose primary aesthetics forms are collage, montage, and pastiche. Similarly, the practical emphasis of today's Kabbalah is related to the decline of interest in theoretical knowledge in contemporary societies, and the importance given today in many areas (including academia) to practical knowledge and efficiency. The psychological emphasis of contemporary Kabbalah (as well as of other New Age movements) is part of the postmodern shift from the collective norms and values of the1950`s and 1960`s, towards a much more competitive individualism, as the central value in an entrepreneurial culture. The exoteric nature of today`s Kabbalah, its perception as open knowledge and the simple ways in which it is usually presented (which are perceived as superficiality by its critics), are typical of other forms of postmodern culture which are fascinated by surfaces (and screens) and are much less interested in the hidden depths that lie behind them. Finally, the commodification of Kabbalah is part of the postmodern expansion of the logic of late capitalism to cultural, and spiritual, fields.

In conclusion, postmodern culture enabled and enhanced the revival of interest in Kabbalah and Hasidism. Kabbalistic and Hasidic movements, themes, and practices (which were marginalized and rejected in modern Jewish culture) gained renewed cultural value from the late 20th century. The new forms of contemporary Kabbalah are based on earlier traditions and practices, yet they differ significantly from earlier forms, and carry distinct New Age and postmodern characteristics.

For further reading:

Jonathan Garb, *The Chosen will become Herds: Studies in Twentieth-Century Kabbalah* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

Boaz Huss, "The New Age of Kabbalah: Contemporary Kabbalah, The New Age and Postmodern

Spirituality," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 6 (2007), 107-125.
Boaz Huss, (ed.) *Kabbalah and Contemporary Spiritual Revival* (Beer-Sheva: Ben Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2011).
Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven&London: Yale University Press, 1988).
Gershom Scholem*, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1988).

Jewish Mysticism:
The Invention of an Unbroken Jewish Tradition

Boaz Huss

1. Introduction

In 1906, the young Jewish philosopher and Zionist activist, Martin Buber (1878 – 1965) published his book, *The Tales of R. Nachman*. He introduced the tales with a short essay entitled "Jewish Mysticism," in which he stated:

> Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav … is perhaps the last Jewish Mystic. He stands at the end of an unbroken Jewish tradition, whose beginning we do not know. For a long time men sought to deny this tradition; today it can no longer be doubted … we must recognize its unity, its individuality and at the same time the many limitations out of which it developed. Jewish Mysticism may appear quite disproportionate, often confused … yet, it is one of the great manifestations of ecstatic wisdom.[1)]

Buber continues to delineate the history and major characteristics of the "unbroken Jewish Mystical tradition," which he regards as a Jewish national expression of universal ecstatic wisdom. The unbroken Jewish Mystical tradition began, according to Buber, in Talmudic times, and it includes the *Sefer Yezirah*, The *Zohar*, Lurianic Kabbalah and Sabbatianism. Its last and most developed manifestation was the early Hasidic movement.[2)]

Buber was not the first scholar to identify Kabbalah and Hasidism as Jewish Mysticism. Yet, Buber's introduction is one of the most succinct and influential formulations of the notion of "Jewish Mysticism," which was invented and constructed in the late 19th and early 20th century.

This new discursive construction was adopted by other Jewish scholars – first and foremost, by Gershom Scholem (1882 – 1897), who made Jewish mysticism the foundational category of a new academic discipline in Jewish studies, which became highly esteemed and influential.

Although much of Scholem's historiography of Jewish mysticism has been contested since the 1980's, the foundational assumption of the field – that Kabbalah, Hasidism, and some other Jewish texts and movements are the expressions of Jewish mysticism--still governs the field, and regulates the ways these texts and movements are perceived and studied. In this short essay, I would like to

examine the invention of Jewish mysticism and its construction as the foundational category of the academic study of Kabbalah and Hasidism.

Before I begin my genealogical analysis, I would like to clarify two main arguments which underlie my discussion.

First, in contrast to the common assumption that mysticism is a universal religious phenomenon, I regard mysticism in general, and Jewish mysticism in particular, as modern, culturally-dependent, discursive constructions. Mysticism, I claim, is not a universal, trans-historical, inherent religious phenomenon. Rather, it is a modern category that emerged in Western Europe and the Unites States in the nineteenth century, in the context of the various ideological, theological and political interests of that period. This new category was used in order to define, organize, and interpret a wide variety of social practices and cultural products.

The various practices and products commonly described as mystical do not have any common denominator and they do not resemble one another more than any other "non-mystical" social practices and cultural products do. I have not been able to find any common traits or characteristics for things which are included under the label "mysticism," except for the assumption that they were all formed under the impact of an ecstatic encounter between human beings and the divine or transcendent reality.

My second claim is that this assumption reflects a modern, ecumenical theological stance, which was adopted, explicitly or implicitly, by modern scholars who use the term as an analytical category. As we shall see in the following, mysticism was defined, from the late nineteenth century and up to the present, as an ecstatic encounter with the divine or with a metaphysical reality. Scholars who accept this definition, assume that various historical events, cultural products and social structures, which they perceive as "mystical," were formed under the impact of human encounters with the divine, or with a transcendent reality. According to such scholars, mystical experiences, i.e., encounters with the metaphysical reality, have had a considerable effect on cultural production, social behavior, and historical events. The assumption that encounters with a divine or transcendent reality explain social, historical or natural events, is a theological supposition, which is unaccepted in most contemporary academic disciplines.

This short article will examine the context and cultural significance of the adoption of the modern category mysticism and its application to various Jewish texts and movements. Before turning to examine the invention of Jewish mysticism, I would like to discuss, shortly, the genealogy of the term mysticism, which underlies the idea of Jewish mysticism.

2. Mysticism

I will not dwell too long on the origins of the term mysticism and its use in late antiquity and the middle-ages. These have been discussed at length by Louis Bouyer.[3] The origins of the term mysticism is the Greek adjective μυστικός, stemming from the verb μύω, whose meaning is to close, or shut (the eyes or mouth), and hence means something secret. It was applied to secret rites and their participants (οί μυστικοί). In medieval Christian theology the term was applied to Christological hermeneutics, to the secret of the Eucharist and to contemplative knowledge of God.

Significant semantic shifts occurred in the use to the term during the early-modern period and it was gradually disconnected from its specific liturgical, hermeneutical and Christological contexts. In the Enlightenment period, the term was used negatively to denote religious excess and applied primarily to Christian sectarians.[4] According to the third edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica (1797), "Mystics" are:

> A kind of religious sect, distinguished by their professing pure, sublime and perfect devotion, with an entire disinterested love of God, free from all selfish considerations … The principals of this sect were adopted by those called Quietists in the seventeenth century, and under different modifications, by the Quakers and Methodists.

It was only during the nineteenth century that mysticism came to be perceived as a universal phenomenon. This new construction of mysticism came to the fore in the eighth edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1852-1860). The entry still retains the Enlightenment negative perception of mysticism, but applies it also to non-Christian cultural formations:

> a form of error…which mistakes the operation of a merely human faculty for Divine manifestation … Its main characteristics are constantly the same, whether they find expression in the Bagvat-Gita of the Hindu, or in the writings of Emmanuel Swedenborg.

A positive perception of mysticism emerged during the same period, under the influence of Romanticism, Idealist philosophy and Spiritualist and metaphysical movements in Europe and the United States. It regarded mysticism not as a form of error, but rather, as an essential component of religion. Instead of regarding it as a negative, excessive, and pathological, it valorized it as the essence of the religious experience.

The new construction and valorization of mysticism as an encounter between human and the divine was formulated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by several highly influential

scholars and liberal Christian theologians, including William Ralfe Inge (1860-1954), William James (1842-1910), Rufus Jones (1863-1948), Friedrich Von Hügel (1852-1925), and Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941).[5] Notwithstanding the assertion of these scholars that it is difficult to define mysticism, they produced very similar definitions, such as that of the Quaker Philosopher and Theologian Rufus Jones:

> I shall use the word to express the type of religion which puts the emphasis on immediate awareness of relation with God, on direct an intimate consciousness of the Divine Presence. It is religion in its most acute, intense and living stage.[6]

Jones and other scholars who adopted similar definitions of mysticism regarded it as a liberating, subversive, and vitalizing force within religion, which contributes to reforming and advancing society:

> We cannot lightly pass over the spiritual service of mystics. Far from being the unpractical, dreamy persons they are often conceived to have been… They have let great reforms, championed movements of great moment to humanity and they have saved Christianity from being submerged under scholastic formalism and ecclesiastical systems, which were alien to man's essential nature and need.[7]

This modern theological notion of mysticism became highly influential, and still regulates the way mysticism is perceived today. It was adopted, from the late-nineteenth century by Jewish scholars who applied it to various Jewish texts and movements, primarily, Kabbalah and Hasidism.

3. Jewish Mysticism

Interestingly, much of the nineteenth-century literature on mysticism as a universal phenomenon does not identify Kabbalah as mysticism. Furthermore, some nineteenth-century scholars (including Jewish scholars),[8] argued that Judaism was incompatible with mysticism, and denied the existence of Jewish mysticism. Such a view can be found in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1910-1911):

> For opposite reasons, neither the Greek nor the Jewish mind lent itself readily to mysticism: the Greek, because of its clear and sunny naturalism; the Jewish, because of its rigid monotheism and its turn towards worldly realism and statutory observance. It is only with the exhaustion of Greek and Jewish civilization that mysticism becomes a prominent factor in Western thought.

The negation of this position played a significant role in the modern construction of Jewish mysticism.

Although the term "Jewish mysticism" did not appear before the nineteenth century, it should be noted that the adjective mystical was applied to Kabbalah in several texts from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Kabbalah was described in this period as a mystical theology, and the *Zohar* as a mystical commentary.[9] The term was used with reference to Kabbalah mostly in its medieval sense of esoteric, Christological hermeneutics and was not used as a basic category for the description of Kabbalah. Yet the fact that the adjective "mystical" was applied to Kabbalah at that time contributed to the later reception of Kabbalah as Jewish mysticism.

The term "Jewish mysticism" appeared for the first time, as far as I know, in the first volume of the magnum opus of the Christian theosopher, Franz Molitor. *Philosophie der Geschichte oder über die Tradition* published in 1827. Although Molitor uses the term several times in his book,[10] he describes Kabbalah firstly and foremostly as a philosophy of history. It should also be noted that Molitor mainly used the term mysticism to indicate esoteric and allegorical meanings of the scriptures and not in the sense of an unmediated experience of the divine.

Later in the nineteenth century, the application of the adjective "mystical" to Kabbalah and the use of the term "Jewish mysticism" became more prevalent in the writings of both Jewish and non-Jewish scholars. Yet, there was still no established notion of a Jewish mystical tradition. Kabbalah was usually perceived as religious Philosophy, as for example in Adolph Franck's influential *La Kabbale ou philosophie religieuse des hebreux* (Paris: L. Hachette., 1843), or in David Heymann Jöel's *Midrash ha-Zohar: Die Religionsphilosophie des Sohar* (Leipzig: Louis Lamm., 1849).

It was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that scholars began to apply the new perception of mysticism as a universal, essential component of religion to Kabbalah and Hasidism that the term "Jewish mysticism" became more prevalent. This perception comes to the fore in Adolph Jellinek's *Auswahl Kabbalisticher Mystik*, from 1853 in which he claims: "Mysticism is such an essential stage in the spiritual development of humanity, that it can be found in all nations and all religions. Yet, while Egyptian, Hindu, and Arab mysticism has been studied, Kabbalah has not been researched."[11]

The term "Jewish mysticism" became the major category for the description, interpretation, and research of Kabbalah in the early twentieth century. Scholars such as Erich Bischoff, S. A. Hirsch, Joshua Abelson, and many others use the term extensively in their studies of Kabbalah.[12] The modern assumptions concerning the nature, historical development, and cultural impact of the newly-

imagined Jewish mystical tradition, comes to the fore in Buber's 1906 article, "Jewish Mysticism", mentioned at the beginning of this study.

Gershom Scholem, who recognized Buber as "the first Jewish thinker who saw in mysticism a basic feature and continuously operating tendency of Judaism,"[13] adopted the newly-constructed notion of Jewish mysticism, and established it as the foundational category for academic research on Kabbalah and Hasidism. Scholem accepted the modern definition of mysticism as a direct and unmediated ecstatic experience of the divine and adopted Buber's assumptions regarding the existence of Jewish mysticism as a continuous and significant movement in Judaism. Scholem and his disciples devoted great efforts to the historical-philological study of the texts and movements they perceived to belong to Jewish mysticism. They turned the research of Jewish mysticism into a highly prestigious academic discipline. Scholem`s assumptions concerning the scope, the nature and the historical impact of Jewish mysticism became authoritative and highly influential. Following the research of Scholem and his school, the identification of Kabbalah and Hasidism as Jewish mysticism came to be taken for granted.

Since the 1980's many of Scholem's theories have been contested and new perspectives and research directions have been suggested by Moshe Idel, Yehuda Liebes, Elliot Wolfson and other scholars. These scholars disputed Scholem's assumptions regarding the source of Jewish mysticism and its historical development. They questioned the exclusivity of the historical-philological method prevalent in the research of Kabbalah and suggested adding other research methods, first and foremost, the phenomenological comparative study prevalent in religious studies.

Yet, the new research did not abandon the fundamental category of the field. The understanding of Kabbalah and Hasidism as Jewish mysticism, and the modern theological definition of mysticism, were not contested. They became even more central in scholarship post Scholem. Thus, for instance, Moshe Idel said in an interview that followed the publication of *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*:

> I wanted to emphasize the elements that turn this literature into mysticism. Not to describe when someone lived, when someone died and if he wrote X number of books or Y number of books. These things are important, without a doubt, and they were done quite well up to now, but this does not touch on Kabbalistic literature as mystical literature, rather as historical literature. This makeover is done to this literature as if it were medieval belles-lettres or poetry. I wanted to deal with the characteristic of this literature as mystical literature.[14]

Following Idel, many contemporary scholars emphasize the experiential and ecstatic aspects of the Kabbalah and Hasidism and through phenomenological and comparative studies. From this

viewpoint, the fundamental category of the research field - the identification of the Kabbalah and Hasidism as Jewish mysticism, continues to delineate the research field and determine its research practices.

4. The Historical Contexts and Cultural Significance of the Invention of Jewish Mysticism

As mentioned above, the idea that Judaism was incompatible with mysticism was prevalent at the time. Buber declared explicitly that his aim in writing the *Tales of Rabbi Nachman* was to prove the existence of such a denied tradition. Buber aimed to prove that Judaism includes mystical components, highly valued in fin de siècle neo-Romanticism, and that Jewish mysticism played a vital part in Jewish national history. In a note he attached to a copy of his newly published book, which he sent to his friend, the renowned German publisher and neo-Romantic, Eugen Diederichs (1867 – 1930), Buber wrote:

> I am sending you a book, *The Tales of Rabbi Nachman*, which you may find interesting. Do you perhaps recall that once – a few years ago – we discussed the question of the existence of Jewish mysticism? You didn't want to believe it. With this book on Nachman I have opened up a series of documents that will expose its existence.[15)]

Attempts to demonstrate the existence of a Jewish mystical tradition were made from a Jewish nationalist perspective. Buber and Scholem, as well as other Jewish scholars of their time, supported Zionism and perceived Jewish mysticism as an essential component of Judaism that expressed its national character. Buber identified Jewish mysticism as the hidden reality of the Jewish "folk soul."[16)] The power and nature of Jewish mysticism was related to Jewish national characteristics and to the vicissitudes of Jewish history:

> [T]he strength of Jewish mysticism arose from an original characteristic of the people that produced it [so] the later destiny of this people has also left its imprint on it. The wandering and martyrdom of the Jews have again and again transposed their souls into that vibration of despair out of which, at time, the lightening flash of ecstasy breaks forth.[17)]

Buber adopted the neo-Romantic perception of mysticism as an anarchic and liberating power that subverts petrified religious establishments. Buber juxtaposed Jewish mysticism to halachic Judaism, and described Hasidism, which he considered to be the most developed expression of Jewish mysticism, as a liberating movement that released the people from the yoke of *halacha*:

> The teaching of the Baal-Shem soon found access to the people who were not equal to its idea yet eagerly welcomed its feeling for God. The piety of this people was inclined from of old to mystical immediacy; it received the new message as an exalted expression of itself. The proclamation of joy in God, after a thousand years of a dominance of law that was poor in joy and hostile to it, acted like a liberation. In addition, the people up till then had acknowledged above them an aristocracy of Talmud scholars alienated from life, yet never contested. Now the people, by a single blow, were liberated from this aristocracy and established in their own value.[18)]

Gershom Scholem accepted and further developed the perception of Jewish mysticism as the vital, national force of Judaism that enabled its preservation in the diaspora. Scholem, like Buber, juxtaposed Jewish mysticism to Jewish legalism. He explicitly declared that the project of the academic study of Jewish mysticism was embedded in a Zionist perspective:

> I wanted to enter into the world of *kabbalah* out of my belief in Zionism as a living thing—as the restoration of a people that had degenerated quite a bit. […] I was interested in the question: Does halakhic Judaism have enough potency to survive? Is *halakhah* really possible without a mystical foundation? Does it have a enough vitality of its own to survive for two thousand years without degenerating?[19)]

The adoption of the modern category mysticism and its application to Jewish culture involved Orientalist presuppositions. Mysticism was perceived as an essential feature of the "Mystic East," whose past was valorized and its present disparaged.[20)] Such a stance was expressed by Jewish scholars towards Jewish mysticism, perceived as connected to the "Oriental essence" of Judaism. In the framework of a Jewish orientalist perspective, Kabbalah and Hasidism had been vital and positive powers in the past but had degenerated and lost their significance in the present. This stance comes to the fore in Buber's claim that R. Nachman was the last Jewish mystic, and that contemporary Hasidism declined and degenerated.[21)] Similarly, Scholem perceived Hasidism as the last stage of Jewish mysticism, and claimed that contemporary Kabbalah became "the esoteric wisdom of small groups of men out of touch with life and without any influence on it."[22)]

The invention of Jewish mysticism was involved in the adoption of a modern ecumenical theological stance, which emerged in the framework of 19th century liberal Christian theology. As described above, this stance regarded mysticism as experiences of encounter with the divine or transcendent reality that exist in every human culture. These experiences were perceived as the

essence of religion, which vitalize and animate human history and culture. These theological assumptions, which were accepted by Buber, Scholem and their followers, are embedded in the contemporary definitions of Jewish mysticism, which still regulate the academic study of Kabbalah and Hasidism.[23)]

5. Conclusion

Jewish mysticism, which was invented in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, became a powerful and productive category. It shaped modern understanding of Kabbalah and Hasidism, and enabled the formation of a central and prestigious discipline within Jewish studies. In the framework of this discipline, highly important studies of texts and movements perceived as part of the Jewish mystical tradition were, and are, conducted.

The productive use of the category mysticism as the foundational analytic category in the study of Kabbalah and Hasidism regulated their research according to the ideological and theological assumptions embedded in this category. The classification of various texts and movements under the rubric of "Jewish mysticism" associates them with other cultural formations, both in Jewish culture and other cultures, to which they have no special affinity, apart from scholars' assumption that they are all based on mystical experiences. This assumption encourages the research and interpretation of unrelated historical phenomena as essentially connected, because of their supposedly mystical origin.

On the other hand, the classification of these texts and movements as mystical tends to detach them from other social arenas, which can be significant for their understanding. As I have argued, the use of the category mysticism involves a theological assumption that explains historical and social realities as products of encounters with the Divine, or transcendent reality. Such theological assumptions tend to differentiate between what are perceived as mystical phenomena, and other, historical, social and political structures and to encourage ahistorical study of Kabbalah and Hasidism. As Ron Margolin diagnosed in connection to Moshe Idel's phenomenological approach: "Idel's phenomenological approach emphasizes inquiry into different manifestations of phenomena such as theurgy, *Unio Mystica* or magic, within the entire Kabbalistic-Jewish body of works, on all its periods. In his research, the historical-diachronic aspect is used as a secondary aid, and the focus is on the actual spiritual phenomenon."[24)]

Hence, I believe that research that aspires to understand Kabbalah and Hasidism in their historical and social context, and seeks to avoid mixing theological presuppositions in academic research, should give up using the category mysticism as an analytic category in research. In my opinion,

Jewish mysticism should be considered as a powerful and productive modern discursive invention, rather than an unbroken Jewish tradition that manifests universal ecstatic wisdom.

Notes

1) Martin Buber, *The Tales* of *Rabbi Nachman* (New York: Horizon Press, 1956), 3.
2) Ibid, pp. 3-17.
3) Louis Bouyer, "Mysticism: An Essay on the History of the Word," in Richard Woods (ed.), *Understanding Mysticism (*New York: Doubleday), pp. 42-55. See also Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and The Mystic East* (London and New York: Routledge 2002), 7-20.
4) Michel de Certeau, "Mysticism," *Diacritics* 22 (1992), pp. 11–25. Eric Leigh Schmidt, "The Making of Modern Mysticism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71 (2003), 273–302.
5) William R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism* (London: University of Oxford press, 1899); James, William James *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (London and Bombay: Longmans, Green and Co, 1902); Rufus M. Jones*, Studies in Mystical Religion* (London: MacMillan. 1909); Friedrich Von Hügel, *The Mystical Element of Religion*, London: General Books LLC, 1909); Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study of the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* (New York: Dutton, 1911).
6) Rufus M. Jones*, Studies in Mystical Religion* (London: MacMillan. 1909), XV.
7) Ibid, p. XXX.
8) Such as for instance, Leo Baeck (who later changed his position). See Alexander Altmann, *Essays in Jewish Intellectual History* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1981), 295–298.
9) See for instance the title of Henry More's book, published in 1662: *A Conjectural Essay of Interpreting the Mind of Moses According to a Threefold Cabbalah viz. Literal, Philosophical, Mystical, or Divinely Moral*. The *Zohar* is described as 'mystical and Kabbalistic commentary' (comentarii Mystici & Cabbalistici) in the Latin title page of the Zohar edition published in Sulzbach in 1684 in the circle of the Christian Kabbalist Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1636-1689). In the early eighteenth century, the Kabbalah was described as 'mystical theology' in the preface of Jacques Basnage, *The History of the Jews from Jesus up to the Present* (London: T. Beaver and B. Lintot, 1708), VII.
10) Joepsh F. Molitor, *Philosophie der Geschichte oder über die Tradition*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Hermann), 44, 135.
11) Adolph Jellinek, *Auswahl Kabbalisticher Mystik* (Leipzig: Colditz.1853), 3-4.
12) Eric Bischoff, *Die Kabbalah: Einfuhrung in die judische Mystick und Geheimwissenschaft* (Leipzig: T. Grieben's Verlag 1903); S.A. Hirsch, "Jewish Mystics: An Appreciation," *JQR* 20, (1907), 50-73; Joshua Abelson, *Jewish Mysticism: an Introduction to the Kabbalah* (New York: Hermin Press1914).
13) Gershom Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis: Selected Essays* (New York: Schocken Books,

1976), 145.

14) Avi Katzman, "Almost a Revolt," *Ha'aretz,* 20.10.1989, p. 23 [Hebrew].
15) Grete Schaeder, (ed.), *Martin Buber: Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten, Band 1: 1897–1918*, (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1972), 253.
16) Martin Buber, *The Tales* of *Rabbi Nachman* (New York: Horizon Press, 1956), 9.
17) Ibid. p. 4.
18) Ibid. p. 15.
19) Gershom Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis* (New York: Schocken Books 1976), 18-19.
20) Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion* (London and New York: Routledge 1999), 96-108.
21) Martin Buber, *The Tales* of *Rabbi Nachman* (New York: Horizon Press, 1956), 3-17.
22) Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 34.
23) See Boaz Huss, "The Theologies of Kabbalah Research," *Modern Judaism* 34 (2014), 3-26.
24) R. Margolin, "Moshe Idel's Phenomenology and its Sources," Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies, Vol. 6, No. 18 (Winter 2007), 43.

On Kabbalah and its Scholarship, On Terms and Definitions: A Response to Prof. Boaz Huss

Doron B. Cohen

I am delighted to welcome to Doshisha my friend Prof. Boaz Huss and honored to share the present workshop with him. Many years have passed since the days when the two of us sat side by side at the feet of some of the illustrious professors of the Hebrew University, pouring over difficult Kabbalistic texts. Boaz went on to make the study of Kabbalah his field of expertise, becoming himself a leading authority in this academic discipline, while I went – regrettably, perhaps – in a different direction. I still try to follow the developments in his field, but by no means can I count myself an expert in it, and therefore my response today may not do justice to his arguments. Still, I will try to raise some questions for the sake of the ongoing academic discussion, with the hope of clarifying some points or initiating a fruitful debate.

1. Kabbalah in Modern Times

I would first like to ask Prof. Huss to clarify one point from his earlier public lecture. He said in his lecture that prior to the relatively recent surge of interest in it, "The central place of Kabbalah diminished in the modern period, and by the middle of the 20th century, only very small circles studied and practiced Kabbalah." However, in the past decade or so several scholars, including Prof. Huss, argued in their studies (some of which I will have cause to mention later) that the previous generations of academic scholars failed to study and to recognize the role of Kabbalah in the first half or so of the twentieth century, a role which may have been more substantial than realized so far. Prof. Huss was surely unable to delve into this question during his public lecture, but if possible I would ask him to clarify his position for us regarding the place of Kabbalah in the modern period prior to the recent and very exoteric surge.

2. Scholem's Legacy

Turning now to his workshop paper, Prof. Huss' main argument is that the designation "Jewish Mysticism" given to some writings and movements in Jewish history is misleading and better

avoided. He argues that "Mysticism in general and Jewish Mysticism in particular are modern, cultural dependent, discursive constructions". The constraint of time will not allow me to delve into the wider question of the definition of "mysticism", and I will limit my response to some of the aspects in the question of its Jewish manifestations. I'll say in advance that although I find great merit in our distinguished guest's approach to this issue, I must also disagree with some of his arguments.

Prof. Huss mentioned two major figures among those who gave rise to the definition "Jewish Mysticism". One was Martin Buber (1878-1965), whose books on Hasidism published in the first decade of the 20th century had a considerable impact on a wide readership, both Jewish and non-Jewish, and contributed significantly to creating a particular image of Hasidism and its teachings. However, Buber's academic career was not in the field of Jewish Mysticism, and the development of that academic discipline was not of his own doing; rather, it was created due to the efforts of a man who started as an admirer of Buber, but gradually grew disillusioned with his writings and methods and went his own independent way.

Gershom (Gerhard) Scholem (1897-1982) was born in Berlin, but soon after completing his academic studies immigrated to Jerusalem (then in Mandatory Palestine) in 1923, without any clear prospects, but out of a strong Zionist conviction in the possibility of Jewish spiritual renewal. When the Hebrew University was inaugurated in 1925 he was appointed a lecturer in Kabbalah – the first ever in any academic institution – later serving as a professor, until his retirement in 1966. He continued to publish his studies until his death, and his bibliography encompasses more than 600 items, including several dozen books. As indicated in Prof. Huss' paper, the founding of the academic study of Kabbalah is attributed to him personally, a unique and perhaps unprecedented achievement. As for "Jewish Mysticism" it is a term he undoubtedly used on certain occasions, but it seems to me that his attitude towards it was complicated and unequivocal.[1)] As far as he was concerned, he was a *historian* of *Kabbalah*.

For those unfamiliar with the field it might be difficult to grasp Scholem's lofty image and lasting impact. Due to his immense intellect he commanded such a towering figure that he could easily be considered intimidating. Naturally, every towering figure attracts detractors who wish to diminish it; however, the case of Scholem is distinct also in that respect: the attacks against his work soon after his death seemed so ferocious, that there was talk of patricide. It seemed to some that younger scholars were doing their best not only to challenge Scholem's arguments, but to demolish his image altogether, like sons who wish to obliterate their father from memory after taking his place. Indeed, the events and atmosphere at the Hebrew University in the decade after his death were so charged and passionate, that I always thought they deserved the attention of a good novelist, since the situation

went beyond normal academic dispute, entering the realm of the epic. Things may have quieted down to a considerable degree since then, but Scholem's legacy and scholars' attitudes towards it are still a vital and sometimes divisive issue.

Indeed, changes constantly occur in every academic discipline, and what is considered an undisputed certainty today, may lose all its appeal tomorrow. Scholem, of course, had his share of errors; he himself realized that like any academic achievement his work would be reexamined, reevaluated and found wanting. However, those who wish to tarnish his image and achievements often quote him selectively, putting too much emphasis on certain words while ignoring other points and miss the wider picture. And their alternative arguments are not always more convincing than his, as Prof. Huss may also admit (see, for example, his criticism of Moshe Idel in today's paper). Scholem's writings still constitute the foundation of the academic study of Kabbalah, which could not have been what it is today without his groundbreaking achievements.

Taking a step back and considering some of the developments in the field, we can see how the spirit of the times dictates the output of academic discourse. Scholem and his direct pupils were guided by the spirit of modernism, and were committed to philological, philosophical and sometimes theological thinking. This was reflected in the titles of their books, which suggested their emphasis on Kabbalah as theosophy. Consider, for example, the following titles, by a few of Scholem's direct pupils: Isaiah Tishbi, *The Doctrine of Evil and the Kelipah in Lurianic Kabbalah* (1942); Joseph Ben-Shlomo, *The Mystical Theology of Moses Cordovero* (1965); Rivka Schatz Uffenhimer, *Quitistic Elements in Eighteenth Century Hassidic Thought* (1968), and so on.

The early generation of scholars was followed by later ones, who came under the influence of postmodernism and of multiculturalism, and their new sensibilities are also reflected in the titles of their books. Their subject matter came to encompass wider, often external aspects of the Kabbalah, rather than focus on its theosophy, and their book titles, in the spirit of the times, became longer and double-headed, combined of a poetical main title followed by an explanatory sub-title; some examples: Melila Hellner-Eshed, *"And a River Flows from Eden": On the Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar* (2005); Jonathan Garb, *"The Chosen will Become Herds": Studies in Twentieth Century Kabbalah* (2005); Jonatan Meir, *Rehovot ha-Nahar: Kabbalah and Exotericism in Jerusalem (1896-1948)* (2011). No doubt, much has changed over the years, as even this small but telling example reveals.

To conclude this *too* long part of my response I wish to ask Prof. Huss to comment on some of the recent developments in the study of Kabbalah as seen from his point of view in the center of the field, rather than from mine on its sidelines.

3. Orientalism

In his paper Prof. Huss referred briefly to the notion of Orientalism, saying: "The adoption of the modern category 'Mysticism' and its application to Jewish culture involved orientalist presuppositions that were connected with this category. The modern idea of mysticism emerged in an orientalist context, and was perceived as an essential feature of the 'Mystical East', whose past was valorized and its present disparaged. "

I must admit that I find this point difficult. First, perhaps like "Jewish Mysticism" itself, "Orientalism" too is a catch-phrase that became too all-embracing, vague and worn out from over-use. It is also charged with negative implications to a degree that makes it an automatic slander, and therefore best used with care. And secondly, even if we use it carefully and in its less-disputed nuances, thinking back on Scholem's oeuvre I cannot imagine how he could be blamed for having had an orientalist perspective, so I would ask Prof. Huss to clarify his intention in using this term in this context.

4. Possible Dangers & Disadvantages (including Theology)

In the final part of his paper Prof. Huss mentions what he perceives to be the dangers or disadvantages of the "Jewish Mysticism" classification, saying: "The classification of various texts and movements as Jewish Mysticism associates them with other cultural formations, both in Jewish culture and other cultures, to which they have no special connection, apart from the scholars' assumption that they are all based on mystical experiences. This assumption encourages the research and interpretation of unrelated historical phenomena as essentially connected, because of their supposedly mystical origin. On the other hand, the classification of these texts and movements as 'Mystical' detach them from other social arenas, which are significant for their understanding. As I have argued, the use of the category Mysticism involves a theological assumption that explains historical and social realities as products of encounters with the Divine, or transcendent reality. Such a theological assumption tends to differentiate between what is perceived as mystical phenomena, and other, historical, social and political structures and to encourage an ahistorical study of Kabbalah and Hasidism."

There are two issues here to which I would like to refer briefly. First, Prof. Huss is no doubt correct in arguing that the designation "Jewish Mysticism" can be problematic. However, the problems which worry him are not manifest in most of the academic studies with which I am familiar. As I said

earlier, I am not fully connected with the field, but the majority of the studies I happen to have read, mainly coming out of Israeli academic institutes, focus on the Kabbalah itself and do not deal with comparisons. Scholars of Kabbalah and Hasidism also seem mindful of the historical and social context of their subject matter, and do not give sole precedence to the "mystical" consideration. Perhaps this has to do with the fact that ever since Scholem himself the equivalent of "Jewish Mysticism" is not frequently used in Hebrew, in which it is more common to speak of *torat ha-sod* (esoteric teaching) or just *Kabbalah*, and these subjects are studied at Israeli universities as part of the departments of "Jewish Thought" (although from a different point of view this might be considered a limitation). I would like to hear Prof. Huss' opinion on this matter too.

Secondly, there is the "theological assumption"; here a distinction must be made between Buber, whose writings, or at least part of them, were manifestly theological, and Scholem, in whose many meticulous historical, biographical and bibliographical studies any theological intentions are rarely found. However, I wonder whether academic discourse should necessarily be detached from any "theological" points of view; in my opinion, as long as scholars make their method clear and do not obscure their motivation, their contributions should be evaluated on their merits and not be rejected on such grounds.

5. Definitions and Power

Finally, Prof. Huss argues: "In my opinion, Mysticism is not a universal, trans-historical, inherent religious phenomenon. Rather, it is a modern category which emerged in Western Europe and the United States in the 19th century, in the context of various ideological, theological and political interests of that period."

In fact, as he pointed out to me on a previous occasion, what he says about Mysticism is also being said nowadays about "Religion" in general. For example, Timothy Fitzgerald argued that "religion" is a modern concept developed in Western Europe and applied incorrectly to non-Western cultures. One of the examples he elaborated upon is Japan, where the term *shūkyō* and the notions associated with it may not have occurred before the Meiji Era. Fitzgerald and other like-minded scholars assume far-reaching cultural and economic consequences for the use of this term.[2] Still, will we be in a better place if we get rid of it altogether?

Most definitions, designations or classifications contain a degree of arbitrariness and can be constantly modified, revised or improved upon, but can also allow for better understanding of phenomena and are therefore useful. Certainly, terms should be handled with care and not taken for

granted, and their meaning may differ according to context or user.

In *Through the Looking Glass* Alice is surprised by Humpty Dumpty's insistence that "When *I* use a word […] it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you *can* make words mean so many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master – that's all."[3)]

Who is the master, then? In one respect words and terms are our masters, since we cannot do without them, but in another, we are their masters, as we can juggle with their meaning and redefine what they signify, making them mean what we choose, or at least try to do so. Since we may each regard ouselves as masters, we end up constantly arguing over meaning. All-encompassing terms such as "Mysticism" or "Religion" can certainly be problematic, as demonstrated by Prof. Huss in his thought-provoking paper and by others in their studies, but before we discard them we should carefully consider their usefulness.

Appendix

Excerpts from Joseph Dan, "Gershom Scholem and the Study of Kabbalah at the Hebrew University", in: *On Gershom Scholem: Twelve Studies*, Jerusalem: Shazar (2010), pp. 41-42 - Translated from the Hebrew.

An important point that should be emphasized is the irrelevancy, during those first years [around 1925] of the term Mysticism, both in the description of Scholem's research work and his teaching at the university. There is a natural inclination, driven by the crystallization of ideas in a later period, to view Scholem's dealing with the Kabbalah as the solidifying of a specifically Jewish stream in the general field called Mysticism, just as the dealing with Jewish philosophy is the solidifying of a specifically Jewish stream in the general field called Philosophy. We have today a detailed description, based on Scholem's autobiography, his letters and diaries, demonstrating clearly Scholem's path to specializing in the Kabbalah, of all things. It turns out that the main factor sending Scholem on the path he walked his whole life was his rebelliousness against the conventions of the surrounding society and against the way Jewish Studies were conducted at the time. Scholem turned to Kabbalah in the framework of his turning to Judaism: just as he chose Judaism, which was rejected and despised in his family and social environment, so he chose the Kabbalah, which was rejected and despised in the Judaism upon which he set his heart. That rebellion, which characterizes Scholem's youth and young adulthood, was the guiding measure for his actions in every matter: he was one of the few and the isolated who refused to be carried away (when he was merely seventeen) by the all-engulfing

wave of German nationalism at the breaking of the First World War; he crystallized an oppositional standpoint towards his leaders and teachers in the German Zionist Movement – and particularly towards his mentor and friend Martin Buber – once they adopted, after some initial hesitations, loyalty to what was called in the German propaganda "a war that was imposed on Germany"; thus they were confronting their Zionist brethren in France and England, who joined their countries' war effort against Germany. Scholem chose to evade service in the German army by pretending madness, refusing to submit to the conventions of the surrounding society. Similarly he rebelled against the systematic assimilation typical to his family and chose Judaism – including the study of Hebrew, something only a few others of his generation and background thought to do. He did not turn to Modern Hebrew but first and foremost to the Jewish sources – the Talmud and Midrash – although it was not easy to find someone to teach him those subjects. Later, when his Jewish and Zionist identification reached maturity, he chose to do what other Jews and Zionist did not even consider: immigrate to Palestine, although he was not persecuted and was not constrained in his Berlin bourgeois milieu. Scholem's letters and diaries, his conversations with Walter Benjamin and their correspondence, testify clearly to Scholem's extremely wide intellectual interests in philosophy and politics, in linguistics and the history of religion [as well as mathematics and other sciences]; but he did not show any special interest in mysticism. The assumption that he was drawn towards mysticism and hence to Jewish mysticism has no expression in the rich material in our possession. Scholem chose the Kabbalah because it was a neglected, remote and despised area inside the world of the Judaism he adopted.

[Later in his article (p. 48) Dan refers to Scholem's famous book, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, published in English in 1941, the first few pages of which deal with the essence of mysticism and its position in the history of religions, adding in a footnote:]

It is an interesting fact that Scholem's generalizations appearing in those pages were not repeated in his other writings; his attitude towards that book was one of reservation (he forbade its translation into Hebrew). It is possible to argue that it was an attempt to create a historical generalization regarding mysticism, but he himself was not proud of it and did not repeat it in his writings in the following forty years or more.

Notes

1) He used it in English, but less often in Hebrew. I cannot elaborate here, but see the appended paragraphs translated from an article by Joseph Dan.
2) Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Oxford University Press, 2000).
3) Lewis Carroll & Martin Gardner, *The Annotated Alice: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking Glass* (Penguin Books, 1970), 269.

第 8 回 CISMOR ユダヤ学会議
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「カバラーとスーフィズム
現代におけるユダヤ教とイスラームの秘儀的信仰と実践」
Kabbalah and Sufism: Esoteric Beliefs and Practices
in Judaism and Islam in Modern Times

Part II

Neo-Sufism

Islamic Mysticism and Neo-Sufism

Mark Sedgwick

Following on Professor Boaz Huss's essay on "The New Age of Kabbalah: Kabbalah and its Contemporary Manifestations," this essay surveys Islamic Mysticism and Neo-Sufism. It does not quite parallel the essay of Professor Huss, as it does not discuss all the contemporary manifestations of Sufism, of which there are very many. Neo-Sufism is one form of modern Sufism, distinguished by being transregional, eclectic and hybrid. I will start with a discussion of the possible meanings of the term *mysticism* in an Islamic context, and then move on to a discussion of classic Islamic Sufism. These two parts of this essay will serve as the basis for the third part, in which Neo-Sufism itself is discussed, looking at its origins, its development, and its current forms.

1. The possible meanings of the term *mysticism* in an Islamic context

"Mysticism" is not, of course, an Islamic term. The complex of ideas and practices indicated by the term in non-Islamic contexts are, however, also found in Islam, and I suspect that the mystical experience of Muslims does not differ greatly from that of other human beings. I say that I *suspect* this because, as a scholar, I can never actually *know*. The interior experience of any other human being is hidden from me, and even my own interior experience is not reliable research data. The general view is that we cannot study an experience, but can merely study how that experience is understood, and perhaps how it is produced. That is to say, we can only study related ideas and practices. Despite this, it is dangerous to ignore the mystical experience altogether, because this can suggest that it is all about ideas and practices. In fact, it is about ideas and practices *and* experiences, even if we cannot study the experiences directly

The term "mysticism" has meant many things in Western scholarship, but one of its root meanings, which was current when it was first applied in an Islamic context by French and British scholars in the 1670s and 1680s, is certain varieties of practice aimed at overcoming the separation between the individual soul and God in this existence. In the eighteenth century, this form of mysticism was especially associated with the names of the priest Miguel de Molinos in Italy and of Bishop François Fénelon in France, both of whose doctrines were ultimately condemned by the Catholic Pope. Their theology and philosophy had its roots in a tradition passing back through a fifteenth-century French

monk, Hugh of Balma, to an early Christian theologian, Dionysius the pseudo-Areopagite, who was active in the late fifth or early sixth century. One of Dionysius's key texts is *Peri mystikēs theologiasi* (On Mystical Theology). This, like much of Dionysius's work, is very much in the Neoplatonic tradition of Late Antique philosophy: Plotinus and Proclus are here the key names. One way of understanding mysticism, then, is as a development of Late Antique Neoplatonism. There are, of course, also several other ways of understanding mysticism. This is not meant to be an exclusive definition.

Neoplatonism is to be found in early Christianity in Dionysius, and in later Christianity in de Molinos and Fénelon. It is also to be found in Islam. The key Greek texts were translated into Arabic in the ninth century, and their influence on much subsequent Arabic philosophy, both Muslim and Jewish, is very strong. One of the greatest Arab philosophers, Ibn Sina (died 1037), for example, is very much a Neoplatonist. So is Ibn Arabi (died 1240). Ibn Arabi was not a philosopher, although he drew on philosophical thinking and terminology. He was rather a devotional, inspirational writer. He is normally counted as a Sufi. He grew up in much the same place and time as the "Prophetic Kabbalah", which Professor Huss discusses in his essay, had its origin.

The same ideas that seventeenth-century Europeans understood as mysticism, then, are to be found in Islam, and derive ultimately from the same Late Antique sources. The practices, however, are somewhat different. The forms of prayer that de Molinos and Fénelon practiced are not found in Ibn Sina or Ibn Arabi. What is found instead are techniques often involving repetition, similar to those used in the Prophetic Kabbalah. The related experiences may be similar, but this cannot be known.

If we focus on ideas, then, on mysticism as Neoplatonism, we will conclude that mysticism is definitely found in Islam, especially in Sufism. It is, in fact, often said that Sufism is Islamic mysticism, but this is not entirely correct. Sufism *includes* mysticism, but also includes much that is *not* mysticism. And mysticism is also to be found in Islam outside Sufism, especially when we look beyond the Sunni Islam of the majority.

Sufism includes mysticism. Some Sufis read Ibn Arabi. Neoplatonic conceptions of mysticism are found among the earliest Sufis in the ninth and tenth centuries. The theoretical framework of Sufism, its metaphysics and theology, are all Neoplatonic. Those Sufis who concern themselves with such things conceive of the Necessary Being as the ultimate cause of existence, and see this world as an emanation of the Universal Intelligence. They believe that by loosening our attachment to the material world we can allow the soul to return by stages to its origin, there to enjoy the contemplation of God, and perhaps to experience re-union with the soul's ultimate source.

Not all Sufis, however, concern themselves with such abstractions. Although some Sufis read Ibn

Arabi, most do not. In fact, in past centuries, most Sufis probably read nothing at all, as they were illiterate. The only text that such Sufis knew was the sections of the Quran that they had learned by heart. Sufism, then, includes mainstream Islam as well as mysticism. Sufism also includes ascetic practice, which is of course often found in conjunction with mysticism, but which can also exist independently. Sufism further includes sociality: it accommodates the general human need to form groups larger than the family for particular purposes, and to act and socialize within such groups. Finally, Sufism includes the veneration of the dead, a near-universal human religious practice that has no formal place in Islamic theology but, despite this, features in many Muslim societies. Sufis venerate their spiritual ancestors, the saints in the religious lineage of the order to which they belong, as well as other saints. The importance of grave-sites varies somewhat from one part of the Muslim world to another and from one Sufi order to another. In South Asia, the tomb complex is central to much Sufi activity.

The standard characteristics of classical Sufism, then, may be said to be five: mysticism, Islam, asceticism, sociality, and saint veneration.

Just as Sufism includes much that is not mysticism, so mysticism is also to be found outside Sufism. Sufism is both Sunni and Shi'i, but is more important among Sunnis than Shi'is. Among the Shi'i minority, especially in Iran, there is also the *'irfan* tradition, where mystic philosophy is taught independently of the other elements found in Sufism. The great name associated with the Iranian *'irfan* tradition is Mulla Sadra (died 1640). Mysticism is also to be found in the theology of smaller Islamic denominations, notably the Druze and the Nizari Ismailis, who derive ultimately from the Fatimid empire of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The Fatimids were probably Islam's most esoteric and mystical dynasty. It has been argued that there are actually four religions in the Middle East, not just the commonly recognized three of Islam, Christianity and Judaism, but those three plus Gnostic Neoplatonism. Although none of the Middle East's smaller minority religions self-identify as Gnostic Neoplatonism, there is some merit in this view. Gnosticism and Neoplatonism are, in practice, closely related.

Islamic mysticism, then, is not just Sufism, and Sufism is not just mysticism. But Sufism is certainly the largest and most important form of institutionalized mysticism in Islam.

2. Classic Islamic Sufism

Classic Islamic Sufism became visible for the first time in the ninth century, initially in the areas that are today Iraq and Iran, from where Sufi orders spread across the Muslim world. Indeed, Islam

was brought to many areas, notably South East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, by Sufi preachers, often traveling as merchants. The only parts of the Muslim world where Sufi orders are not found today, that is in and around Saudi Arabia, are parts from where Sufism has been deliberately excluded by hostile states over the last century.

Since its spread, Sufism has taken many different forms under different circumstances. Sultans and scholars have been Sufis, and so have bakers and peasants. Sufi orders have grown in great cities, and in small villages. Towns have grown up around the tombs of Sufi saints. Some Sufi orders have been incorporated into the Janissary regiments of the Ottoman army, while others have been companies of merchants, or roaming bands of beggars. Sufis have produced fine poetry in Arabic and Persian. The music of the Mevlevi order was one of the peaks of Ottoman imperial culture. Sufis have occasionally led rebellions, sometimes successfully, becoming kings. Most, however, have been ordinary Muslim believers, living ordinary lives.

Classical Sufism, then, was a very widespread phenomenon, well integrated into Muslim society. It was, however, also often controversial. Some individual Sufis and some Sufi orders ignored aspects of the Sharia, the code by which pious Muslims live. Sufi poetry, with its images of love and intoxication, was often risqué, and could appear scandalous. There were concerns about the mixing of the sexes at the festivals held to mark saints' anniversaries. Some Sufi practices, and some Sufi theology, seemed to have little justification in the Quran and *hadith*, the canonized texts of Islam. The veneration of Sufi saints and living Sufi masters looked to some like the worship of beings other than God, which Islam very specifically prohibits.

Initially, these were the concerns of a minority. Sufism was part of the religious establishment and close to the political establishment, and challenges to Sufism were also challenges to the establishment. In the early fourteenth century, one of the most outspoken early critics of the Sufis, Ibn Taymiyya (died 1328), ended up in jail in Damascus for his pains, deprived of writing instruments. During the nineteenth century, however, those Muslim states that had escaped occupation by European powers launched reform programs comparable to Japan's Meiji Restoration in an attempt to maintain their place in the world. The religious establishment was irretrievably weakened by these reform programs, and the concerns and values of the political establishment shifted. Sufism seemed inextricably associated with the old order, a superstitious relic of ignorance, an obstacle to progress, rather as the Kabbalah seemed to the Jewish reformers of the Haskala, as Prof. Huss reminds us. Its critics were now generally welcomed by the new establishment. Progressive lawyers with degrees from French universities had little understanding of, or sympathy with, its ideas or worldview. If anything, they were more inclined to pay attention to the scripturally-based criticisms of religious revivalists such

as the Wahhabis in the Arabian peninsular. By 1950, Sufism in the Muslim world was a shadow of its former self, ignored or actively undermined by new state elites and their religious establishments, and attacked by religious reformers. It was found increasingly in poor and rural circumstances. Western scholars awaited its final demise, defeated by modernity.

Modernity, however, turned out to be more complicated than was thought in 1950. As the Iranian Revolution clearly showed, Islam was not being rationalized into insignificance. The resurgence of Islam, initially most visible in politics, soon became visible also in society. Somewhat unevenly from country to country, personal religious practice became more careful, and public piety became the new norm. Some Sufi orders began to expand again, sometimes in classic form and sometimes in new forms. Perhaps the most successful of all orders that kept close to classic forms was the Boutchichiyya (Budshishiyya) in Morocco, which today has a major presence. The Boutchichiyya is courted by the Moroccan state partly as an alternative to the political Islam and Salafism that the state sees as its major enemy, but also because it is too big and influential to be ignored. The Gülen movement in Turkey, in contrast, does not at first sight seem to be a Sufi order, but is understood by some as a repackaging of Sufism in new forms. This point can be argued, but there is definitely something to it. The Gülen movement has become so big and influential that it seems to have come to challenge the Turkish government and state, leading to a large, if partly hidden, conflict that it currently seems to be losing.

The Boutchichiyya and the Gülen movement are both examples of modern Sufism. The Boutchichiyya is modern because, although in many ways hard to distinguish from a major Sufi order of 1750, its senior ranks contain too many French-speaking former socialist intellectuals, too many holders of PhDs from Western universities, and too many yoga practitioners, and its structures are too complex. It displays, however, all five standard characteristics of classical Sufism: mysticism, Islam, asceticism, sociality, and saint veneration. The Gülen movement is modern because its repackaging of classic Sufism is so general that it is not obvious that it is even really a Sufi order any longer. Like the Boutchichiyya, however, it too displays all five standard characteristics of classical Sufism, though saint veneration is somewhat less emphasized.

3. Neo-Sufism

Neither the Boutchichiyya nor the Gülen movement are really comparable to the eclectic, syncretic, and hybrid contemporary Kabbalah that Professor Huss discusses. What is comparable is Neo-Sufism, which differs from other forms of modern Sufism in that it is inherently transregional, eclectic

and hybrid. The slow merging of formerly separate regional systems into one single global system is one of the most significant dynamics of recent centuries, and is one major driver of modernity. The regional system of the Muslim world was of course never totally independent of other regional systems. It drew on the Late Antique world for its philosophy, as we have seen, and it traded with both China and Europe, coming to make its own paper after Chinese models and its own firearms after European models. Contacts *within* the Muslim world were, however, very much more frequent, intense, and important than contacts with other regional systems. During the nineteenth century, this changed. From the perspective of Cairo, Paris and London replaced Istanbul and Fez as points of reference. Small transregional spaces opened up. One such space, the Islamo-Western, was inhabited by Muslims who knew French or English and had spent time in Paris or London. A parallel space, the Western-Islamic, was inhabited by Westerners who knew Arabic, Ottoman or Persian and had spent time in Cairo, Istanbul, or Bombay. Later, as the cost of travel dropped dramatically during the second half of the twentieth century, these original transregional spaces became much larger. Today there are estimated to be some 450,000 Egyptian Americans, and around 3,000,000 Turkish Germans. Inhabitants of nineteenth-century transregional spaces, in contrast, numbered in the hundreds, or perhaps the low thousands.

Transregionalism is an interesting phenomenon as a driver of modernity. It is also interesting in the case of Neo-Sufism because the transregional is necessarily eclectic and hybrid, since the relevant regions are defined culturally and religiously. I follow standard usage by referring to them as the Western and Muslim worlds, but in fact "Western" really means Latin Christian. What we now call "West" corresponds closely to the region where the Latin language and Church were once dominant, plus the overseas territories of that region. This was a region dominated by Christianity, though some Jews were also present.

Historically, the first transregional space to develop neo-Sufism was the Western-Islamic space inhabited by Westerners who knew Persian and had spent time in India. What developed in this space during the late eighteenth century was an understanding of Sufism as a form of perennial religion. The idea that mankind has a single original, perennial or primordial religion is a very old one. A form of it exists in the three major monotheistic religions, all of which find their origin in the first man, Adam, and see themselves as the continuation of the earliest human religion. The conception of the perennial religion, however, differs from this in that the perennial religion is seen as a secret, separate from these well-known monotheistic religions. Some early European versions of perennialism emphasized chains of transmission within Judeo-Christian mythology, for example starting with the sons of Noah after the flood and passing through the Knights Templar to the present, or through the

medium of the Kabbalah, as Professor Huss reminds us. Other versions, especially popular during the Renaissance, emphasized writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, thought to have survived from pagan antiquity. Still other versions, especially popular among British scholar-officials in Bengal during the late eighteenth century, sought to bring the religions of India into a unified scheme. These efforts were the direct ancestors of today's respectable academic discipline of the History of Religions. The great name here is that of Sir William Jones (died 1794), who is also generally credited with founding the science of Comparative Linguistics. These early scholars sometimes made path-breaking discoveries, as when Jones identified the Indo-European language family, but sometimes got things wrong, as when Jones identified the origins of the Japanese in "Hindus of the martial class."

Jones wrote relatively little on Sufism, but his view of it, expressed in 1789, was nevertheless influential, in two respects. Firstly, he saw Sufism as perennial religion, as survival of the "primeval religion" of Iran, developed by Persians and Hindus, and transmitted to ancient Greece. Secondly, he saw the essence of Sufism as a pared-down monotheism almost identical to the religious system then known in England as Theism. Theists, who included Jones's father's friend Sir Isaac Newton, believed in one God as creator, but did not accord much importance to the details of Christian mythology, including Jesus. They believed in the importance of love of God, but not especially in the details of Christian ritual. Finally, they emphasized the importance of "a fraternal affection for the whole human species." This seems to have been the personal creed of Jones himself.

Theism was given scope for development by globalization, as increasing knowledge of non-Western cultures and histories helped Theists such as Jones to theorize a wider History of Religions that went beyond the narrow limits of Christianity. It was also, however, a response to globalization, as increasing knowledge of non-Western cultures and histories was, along with advances in the natural sciences, an important factor in leading Western intellectuals to doubt previously accepted narratives. Jones' understanding of Sufism, then, was a consequence of globalization in two different ways.

The picture of Sufism given by Jones in 1789 was developed and deepened by other English scholar-officials in India over the following forty years. The consensus that resulted was that Sufism was only accidentally associated with Islam, and was in fact a survival of the perennial religion, of very ancient origin, perhaps in pre-Islamic Iran. Sufis were thought to pretend to follow Muslim practices so as to avoid difficulties, but in fact to follow a variety of Theistic mysticism, aiming at the Divine essence, not concerned with dogmas, superstitions, and rituals. This view of Sufism became quite general in the West during the nineteenth century, further encouraged by the publication of

translations of Sufi poetry, which, as has already been mentioned, is often risqué, and may not appear particularly Islamic. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, scholars using methods similar to those we use today began to correct this picture, but the Neo-Sufi views of Jones and his colleagues proved more influential for the general public. These were the views of Sufism that were accepted in the late nineteenth-century alternative religious milieu that grew up around the Theosophical Society of Helena Blavatsky (died 1891). The Theosophical Society was, of course, the focus for the development of so much subsequent alternative religiosity.

The view of Sufism that started with Jones and ended with Blavatsky was a view, not a practice. For over a century after 1789, there were no Neo-Sufi groups in the West. Then, in 1911, the first such group was established in Paris by a Swedish-French painter who had spent time in Egypt, Ivan Aguéli. Aguéli was active in the avant-garde Parisian milieu of the time, where surrealist artists mixed with occultists, Theosophists, anarchists, feminists and proponents of animal rights. Then, in the new Europe that emerged after the First World War, other Neo-Sufi groups were set up. In 1918, a German who had spent time in Turkey, Rudolf von Sebottendorf, established a Sufi-inspired group in Munich. In the 1920s, an Indian musician who had spent time in America, Inayat Khan, established a so-called "Sufi Movement" in London. In 1922, a Greek-Armenian-Russian religious teacher, George Gurdjieff, established a partly Sufi-inspired group in Paris. Finally, in 1934, a German-Swiss commercial artist who had spent time in Algeria, Frithjof Schuon, established a Sufi order in Basel, Switzerland.

Most of these Neo-Sufi pioneers were inhabitants of Western-Islamic transregional space. Khan, in contrast, was an inhabitant of Islamo-Western space. His understanding of Sufism, however, derives from the Western-Islamic space, probably from contacts and reading in New York before the First World War. Gurdjieff, in turn, demonstrates the problem with binary systems of analysis. His native Russian Armenia does not fit into either the Islamic or the Western region. Though Christian, it was never Latin.

These early Neo-Sufi groups were very diverse. Aguéli's group did not survive long enough to develop a clear profile, but probably mixed Sufism with French esotericism. One of its members, the French writer René Guénon, later developed a distinctive view of perennial religion and temporal cycles that drew heavily on Neo-Hindusim. Guénon, however, moved from Paris to Cairo, where he lived as a Sufi. His writings remain very influential today. Aguéli's group, then, had only one of the five standard characteristics of classical Sufism: mysticism. To this Guénon added Islam.

Von Sebottendorf quickly lost control of his group, which is remembered not because of Neo-Sufism, but because one of its members founded what became the Nazi Party. The only characteristics

of classical Sufism of which there are any trace in his group are mysticism and perhaps sociality.

Inayat Khan's Sufi Movement became increasingly Theosophical in its emphasis, with the Islamic elements that had been present at the start becoming less and less important. By the time of Inayat Khan's early death in 1927, the only standard characteristic of classical Sufism that remained was sociality, perhaps with some small degree of mysticism. The Sufi Movement spread widely during the interwar period, supported by wealthy followers in the Netherlands. By the start of the Second World War, it had followers in the Netherlands, France, England, and the United States, and a small presence in several other countries. It remains in existence today.

Gurdjieff's group, which became known as the Fourth Way, used Sufism primarily as legitimization and inspiration. Most of the Fourth Way has other origins. The Fourth Way, however, does display three of the standard characteristics of classical Sufism: a form of mysticism, asceticism, and sociality. By the start of the Second World War, the Fourth Way was established especially in France, England and the United States. It, too, remains in existence today.

Finally, Schuon's order, which became known as the Maryamiyya, drew primarily on Guénon for its theology, but was close to classical Sufism in its practice. It displayed all five standard characteristics of classical Sufism: mysticism, Islam, asceticism, sociality, and saint veneration. Islam was understood within the framework of Guénon's thought, as a means to an end rather than an end in itself, but was still present. The saints who were venerated were Schuon himself and, unusually for a Muslim group, the Virgin Mary. By the start of the Second World War the Maryamiyya was established in France as well as Switzerland. It, too, remains in existence today.

At the start of the Second World War, then, Neo-Sufism was a small but well established hybrid phenomenon, with origins mainly in the Western-Islamic transregional space. Its understanding of Sufism derived ultimately from Jones in 1789, and included other later elements: Theosophical for Khan and the Sufi Movement, theosophical and psychological for Gurdjieff and the Fourth Way, and Guénonian for Schuon and the Maryamiyya. In terms of practice, the Maryamiyya approached the norms of classical Sufism, the Fourth Way drew on Sufi inspiration for its so-called Sacred Dances, and the Sufi Movement drew little from classical Sufism save a few terms.

All these early Neo-Sufi groups survived the Second World War, and expanded during the 1960s and 1970s, as alternative spirituality expanded throughout the West. Most adjusted to the hippy generation, but not all. The Maryamiyya regarded the social revolution of the 1960s and 1970s as yet one more sign of the spiritual and intellectual decline of humanity. At the other extreme, one Californian branch of the Sufi Movement established "Dances of Universal Peace" that rivaled the Hare Krishna Movement for the attention of the hippies of San Francisco.

Neo-Sufism in the 1970s changed in response to the hippy generation, and also in response to the growing importance of Sufi teachers from the Islamo-Western transregional space. It also changed in that the United States became more important. During the interwar period, Neo-Sufi groups generally became established in Europe and then spread to the United States; during the 1970s, the United States was the point of origin of many new Neo-Sufi orders, including the first, established in Philadelphia by a Sri Lankan Tamil, Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, in 1971-73. He was followed in 1976 by a Turkish Mevlevi shaykh, Süleyman Loras, and then in 1978 by another Turkish shaykh, this time of the Jerrahi order, Muzaffer Ozak. Meanwhile, Neo-Sufism in Europe was also changed by the arrival of Turkish teachers: Ali Bülent Rauf in 1973, and Muhammad Nazim, a Naqshbandi, in 1974. In 1983 an Iranian shaykh who had had Western followers in Tehran, Javad Nurbaksh, a refugee from the Iranian revolution since 1979, arrived in England.

Most of these Sufis from the Muslim world were initially welcomed by existing Neo-Sufi groups or their offshoots, notably by various branches of the Sufi Movement. Followers of the Fourth Way were also sometimes important facilitators. In many cases, issues then arose over the question of the relationship between Sufism and Islam, and eclecticism reduced somewhat. Ali Bülent Rauf and Javad Nurbaksh in England supported the Neo-Sufi understanding of Sufism as something separate from Islam, but even they ended by partially Islamizing their followings, given that their own ideas and practices were firmly rooted in classic Sufism. The other shaykhs all followed and taught mainstream Islamic norms of behavior, and so ended up with predominantly Muslim followings. No-one was required to convert to Islam to join their orders, but most who joined their orders did, in the end, convert to Islam, sometimes following liberal interpretations, and sometimes following more strict ones. Even so, Neo-Sufi ideas and emphases often remained.

By the late 1980s, then, Neo-Sufism existed in various forms, and had spread to most Western countries, including much of South America. Since then, as mentioned above, transregional spaces have expanded enormously, and the distinction between regions has declined. In the 1920s, it was possible for a Westerner to visit the Muslim world once in a lifetime, but unusual. In the 1970s, it was possible for a Turkish shaykh to fly to New York occasionally, but still unusual. Today, a return air ticket from Germany or the Netherlands to Istanbul costs around €160, a Skype call costs nothing, and much the same TV channels can be watched in Paris as in Casablanca. Many among the large Muslim minorities now found in most Western countries have transregional family and social networks. These conditions and these networks facilitate the spread of many types of Sufi order from the Islamic world into the West. Modern Sufi orders such as the Boutchichiyya and the Gülen movement have a transregional presence, and so do some Sufi orders that would not necessarily be

classified as modern, such as the Mourides of Senegal or various orders based in rural Pakistan. These orders are in all respects classic Sufi orders, and have little in common with the eclectic and hybrid Neo-Sufism that this essay has been addressing. They do, however, inevitably come into some contact with Neo-Sufism in the West, and it will be interesting to see how relations between these new entrants into the transregional Sufi field and older Neo-Sufism develop over coming years.

4. Conclusion

If mysticism is understood in terms of Neoplatonism, it is found in Islam, especially in Sufism, though it is also found outside Sufism, in the Iranian *'irfan* tradition, and among small denominations such as the Nizari Ismailis, the Druze and the Alawis. The existence of mysticism in Islam is explained by the transmission of much the same ideas as those that lie behind it in the West, but it is important not to ignore the mystical experience, even though this is not accessible to standard scholarly methods.

Classical Sufism, with its five standard characteristics of mysticism, Islam, asceticism, sociality, and saint veneration, became very widespread in the Muslim world, and was found amongst rich and poor, educated and uneducated, urban and rural. The Sufi orders suffered, however, from the reform process of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, reaching a low point around 1950. Since then, some modern Sufi orders, such as the Boutchichiyya and the Gülen movement, have recovered and expanded. In recent years they have also expanded transregionally into the West, but this is incidental. The form of Sufism that is intrinsically transregional, eclectic and hybrid is Neo-Sufism.

Neo-Sufism's understanding of Sufism originated in eighteenth-century globalization, in Western-Islamic transregional space, most notably in the understanding of Sir William Jones of Sufism as perennial religion and as Theism. This developed into a general understanding in the West of Sufism as perennial mysticism, an understanding that was right in terms of the mysticism but wrong in terms of the perennialism, as Islam is one of the chief characteristics of classical Sufism. It was an understanding that also ignored asceticism, sociality, and saint veneration.

This eighteenth-and nineteenth-century understanding of Sufism was put into practice during the early twentieth century, and lay behind the earliest Neo-Sufi groups, of which the Sufi Movement, the Fourth Way, and the Maryamiyya have survived. These groups, especially the Sufi Movement and the Fourth Way, provided fertile ground in the 1970s for new Neo-Sufi groups, led this time by Sufi shaykhs inhabiting Islamo-Western transregional space. Although some of the resulting groups adhered to the original view of Sufism as perennial rather than Islamic, most taught standard Islamic practice, and so ended up with followings that were, in one way or another, Islamic. The result was

four varieties of Neo-Sufi groups: original non-Islamic, original Islamized, later non-Islamic, and later Islamized. In recent decades, this picture has been complicated by the dramatic expansion of transregional space, and so the expansion into this space of other Sufi orders, some modern and some less modern.

Neo-Sufism, then, is a consequence of globalization, first visible in 1789. It shows how different regions, cultures and religions can interact peacefully, producing new and hybrid religious syntheses appropriate for new times and new needs. In today's often dark times, when conflict between regions and religions is often in the news, Neo-Sufism is perhaps a cause for some cautious optimism.

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Neo-Sufism in the 1960s: Idries Shah

Mark Sedgwick

1. Introduction

The 1960s saw the start of major social and cultural changes that still mark the world today. Among these, in both North America and Western Europe, was a growth in alternative religiosity. Alternative religiosity, defined in a Western context as doctrines and practices distinct from those promoted by the major Christian and Jewish denominations, was of course not new. The late nineteenth century had seen the growth of the Theosophical Society, a major forum for the development of alternative religiosity, and other forms of alternative religiosity were also found in the interwar period. Alternative religiosity in the nineteenth century and the interwar period, however, was still the alternative of a small minority. During the 1960s, as the Beatles traveled to India to attend the ashram of Maharishi Yogi (in 1968), alternative religiosity seemed to be becoming almost mainstream, at least for the generation born after 1940. The books of the "Neo-Shaman" Carlos Castaneda (1925-98), of which the first, *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge*, was published in 1968, are said by Wikipedia to have sold 28 million copies.[1)]

No Sufi or Neo-Sufi ever became as famous as Castaneda or Maharishi Yogi, but Idries Shah, the subject of this article, came close to it. Starting with *The Sufis* in 1964, his books are said to have sold 15 million copies,[2)] a figure which is of course hard to verify (like Castaneda's 28 million). Shah certainly received more public attention than any other Neo-Sufi. In 1970, for example, the BBC invited him to make a television program in the long-running "One Pair of Eyes" series, a distinction given to public figures such as the novelist Margaret Drabble, the playwright Tom Stoppard, and the astronomer Patrick Moore. In 1974, a lead article in *Time* magazine on the campaign of Jerry Brown for governor of California mentioned Brown's reading material as including "Thomas Merton on Zen, Arnold Toynbee on the future, Idries Shah on Sufi parables."[3)] No other Neo-Sufi ever received this sort of attention.

Despite Shah's fame and impact on the Western public, he has attracted almost no scholarly interest.[4)] The novelist and Nobel Laureate Doris Lessing (1919-2013) was one of his followers, and so Shah has been examined in work on Lessing written by scholars in literature. Scholars in religious studies and Islamology, however, have generally ignored him. One exception is Laurence Elwell-

Sutton, a Persianist, who in 1975 published an article entitled "Sufism and Pseudo-Sufism."[5] Elwell-Sutton's main point was that Shah was a "pseudo-Sufi," not a "real" Sufi. His approach to Shah was hostile rather than analytical.

Most of what has been written about Shah is either hagiographical or hostile. This article will avoid both approaches. Shah did not give an academically accurate presentation of Sufism, but neither did Castaneda give an academically accurate presentation of Shamanism. Castaneda, like Shah, drew hostile commentary. Several scholars, however, have since argued that this misses the point. For Alan Olson, Castaneda "effectively and creatively recontextualizes some of the more salient features of medieval mysticism in a manner that is both provocative and compelling."[6] For Charlotte Hardman, Castaneda "was the storyteller who was able to retell the old stories to capture imaginations. The stories had been told before but never with such persuasive force."[7] Something similar, it will be seen, can be said of Shah.

This article will examine the nature of Shah's Neo-Sufism, and the reasons for its success. It will argue that Shah drew on existing Western conceptions of Sufism as universal wisdom separate from religion, on the legacy of Georges Gurdjieff (1866-1949), and on the literature and anecdote of the Muslim world, sources that were then little known in the West. Unlike many other Neo-Sufis of the period, he did not draw in any significant way on Islam as a religion, as opposed to drawing on the Muslim world as a civilization, and specifically on its literature.

2. Shah's early life and influences

Idries Shah was born in Simla, the "summer capital" of British India, in 1924. He was the son of the Indian-British writer, Ikbal Ali Shah (1894-1969), who had remained in Britain with a Scottish wife after originally moving to Britain to study medicine, and had attempted to establish an Islamic Society in London in 1918 together with Inayat Khan (1882-1927),[8] the dominant figure in the Western Neo-Sufism of the interwar period. Although born in Simla, Shah was brought up mostly in England, and attended the City of Oxford High School.[9] His father lived off his writing, which covered "Oriental" topics, ranging from travelogues to biographies of well-known figures such as Atatürk, the Aga Khan, and King Fuad of Egypt. Nothing is known of Shah's early adulthood, about which he said nothing either to friends or family, save that in the 1940s he spent some time with his father in South America.[10]

Shah's earliest interests were not in Sufism but in occultism. His first book, published in 1956 when he was 32, was *Oriental Magic*, a popular treatment of magic in various non-Western cultures,

lent weight by a brief foreword by a young French anthropologist, Louis Marin (1931-92). It was followed in 1957 by *The Secret Lore of Magic*, which paraphrased classic Western texts,[11] and paid little attention to "Oriental" magic.[12] It indicates a familiarity with classic occultist works, including Eliphas Lévi.[13] In 1957 Shah also published a light travelogue, *Destination Mecca*. This includes what seems a well-informed account of smuggling cigarettes into Spain from Morocco, as well as accounts of other Arab countries that may or may not have been based on first-hand knowledge, so Shah may well have spent some of his early adulthood traveling, as he indeed later said himself. In 1958 or 1963 he married Cynthia Kabraji, a woman of a very similar background to his own, the daughter of the Indian-British writer and poet Fredoon Kabraji (1897-1986) and of one Eleanor Wilkinson.[14]

In 1956, then, Shah seems to have been partly following in his father's footsteps with books on "Oriental" topics, and also following a new track, magic. In 1959, he met Gerald Gardner (1884–1964), a former rubber planter and colonial official who had moved through Rosicrucianism and the Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.) to running a Museum of Magic and Witchcraft on the Isle of Man and working to revive the practice of witchcraft, organizing a coven as well as publishing several books on the topic.[15] Shah was the ghost-writer for Gardner's biography.[16]

In 1961, Shah became friends with the celebrated English writer Robert Graves (1895-1985), known especially for his war poetry and his historical novels set in Greek and Roman antiquity, especially *I, Claudius*, published in 1934 and made into a very successful television series in 1976. Graves was interested in witchcraft, on which he published in 1948 (*The White Goddess*) and also in hallucinogenic mushrooms, on which he published in 1960 ("Centaurs' Food").[17] On a visit with Gardner to the Spanish island of Majorca, where Graves had been living since the 1920s, Shah wrote to Graves that he had been attending "experiments conducted by the witches in Britain, into mushroom-eating and so on."[18] This interested Graves, who met Shah and Gardener.[19] He was not impressed by Gardener, but he and Shah became close friends.[20] Under the influence of Graves, Shah moved on from witchcraft and mushrooms, dropping a project to write *The Secret Lore of Alchemy* as a companion to *The Secret Lore of Magic*.[21] He attempted to interest Graves in a joint project to re-write the *Thousand and One Nights*, to "decode" it in the light of Graves's re-reading of Greek myth.[22] Graves had succeeding in making classical antiquity speak to modern readers, and might well have done the same for Arab antiquity. He does not seem to have been much interested in Shah's idea, as there is no word of the project getting anywhere. The basic idea of re-reading and re-writing myths and stories from the Muslim world, however, was of great importance for Shah's later work.

At some time before 1961, Shah also encountered the "Fourth Way" of Georges Gurdjieff, though

there is no indication of how this happened, and Gurdjieff is not mentioned in his later work, which frequently cites ancient and Islamic sources, but never acknowledges or discusses modern or Western sources. It may have been through the works of Gurdjieff's close colleague Peter D. Ouspensky (1878-1947), whose *In Search of the Miraculous* was published in 1949, and would almost certainly have come to the attention of anyone with a serious interest in the occult.

3. Shah as Sufi

Shah seems to have focused most on the Sufi elements in Gurdjieff's (largely fictional) autobiography. In 1961, an article entitled "Solo to Mecca" was published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, a venerable British monthly that accepted a variety of literary genres. The author was given as "Omar Burke," but this was evidently a pseudonym. The article tells the tale of a Persian-speaking Englishman who is helped on his way to Mecca by a number of Sufis, the first of whom he meets in a cafe. This Sufi explains that Sufism is the ancient and universal essence of all religions, following (but not mentioning) the universalistic interpretation of Inayat Khan and other Neo-Sufis before him, and takes the Englishman to spend a month in a Sufi "monastery," where the participants practice the "Stop" exercise, the characteristic practice of the Gurdjieff "Work." They also explain that there is a secret Sufi hierarchy, and that the peak of this hierarchy is "the Grand Sheikh of the Sufi Way," a prince known as *Idries Shah* [original italics], glossed as "the Studious King."[23] Although individual Sufi orders have shaykhs and even sometimes grand shaykhs, there has never actually been any single Grand Sheikh of the Sufi Way. *Shah* does indeed mean "king," but *Idries* does not mean "studious." It is, rather, the name of a minor prophet mentioned in the Quran, though some imaginative manipulation of Arabic morphology might conceivably produce a meaning of "studious."

Shah is the most likely author of "Solo to Mecca," as the article's style and even some of the events are reminiscent of his *Destination Mecca*. It is possible, however, that the article was written by Shah's older brother Omar Ali Shah (1922-2005), whose first name was used in the article's author's pseudonym, and who might conceivably have intended the reference to his brother Idries as Grand Sheikh of the Sufi Way as an amusing Christmas present to his brother—the article was published in the Christmas issue of *Blackwood's*.

Despite humorous elements, the article had serious consequences. One of its readers was Reginald Hoare (?-?), a scion of the British banking family, who had been a follower of Ouspensky since 1924 and then a follower of Gurdjieff himself after 1948.[24] Hoare wrote to "Omar Burke" via the editor of *Blackwood's*, and received a reply from Shah.[25] Shah was then invited to visit a group of expatriate

English Gurdjieffians in Paris, which he did in 1962, bringing with him his brother Omar. It is unclear what the Shah brothers said or how they presented themselves, but the Parisian Gurdjieffian group was evidently in search of a leader, and in 1963 took the Shah brothers as its joint leaders. Omar remained in Paris as the resident leader of the group.[26] Idries Shah returned to London, where Hoare introduced him to the Gurdjieffian group run by John G. Bennett (1897-1974), which was also in search of a leader, as Bennett had been led by various events to expect a messenger from the Source of Gurdjieff's teachings.[27]

Shah presented himself to Bennett in a "Declaration of the People of the Tradition" not as a Sufi but as a representative of an "Invisible Hierarchy" which possessed a "superior form of knowledge" which made it possible to "slip through the veil of conditioning to a perception with a part of the mind which is virtually unused."[28] His "Declaration" ends with a direct call to those of Bennett's followers who had "capacity for obtaining the special knowledge of man which is available" to form "a harmonious organism... to provide an external and interior format with which to work."[29] At first, Bennett and his followers merely reflected on this call.

Then, in 1964, Shah published his most important book, *The Sufis*, which identified Sufism as "the secret tradition."[30] Graves, who had been in correspondence with Shah since meeting him in 1961, wrote a long and enthusiastic introduction to *The Sufis*, and explained that it was he who had encouraged Shah to write it.[31] Graves accepted a universalistic construction of Sufism. "The Sufis are at home in all religions," he stated, even though they are "commonly mistaken for a Moslem sect." In fact, Sufis are an ancient spiritual order of unknown origins, with "no religious dogma however tenuous" who "respect the rituals of religion insofar as these further social harmony."[32] This universalist understanding of Sufism was followed in the book itself by Shah. Sufism is universal, a combination of the secret wisdom of the Jews, Zoroastrians, Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians. "Formal religion is for the Sufi merely a shell ... which fulfills a function."[33]

As well as accepting a universalistic construction of Sufism, Graves also accepted the construction of Shah himself as Grand Sheikh of the Sufi Way, adding that he had inherited the secrets of his ancestors, the Caliphs,[34] evidently a confused reference to the Shah family tradition of descent from Ali al-Rida, the eighth Shi'i imam.[35] This identification followed a short anonymous article in *The Times* in which the absent leader of the Sufis was again identified as Idries Shah, this time spelled "Idd-rees Shaah."[36] At the beginning of his Sufi career, then, Shah was not only promoting his writing, which is generally considered acceptable, but also his own qualifications as writer, which, when involving this degree of exaggeration, is generally considered less acceptable.

Graves's support of Shah was valuable. *The Sufis* was published not by the small publisher of

Oriental Magic, Rider & Co., which specialized in occult and the spiritual works, but by the major publisher W. H. Allen in London, with US publication by Doubleday. This and the introduction by Graves was enough to get the book a review in *The Spectator* in the UK and in the *New York Times Book Review* in the US. In *The Spectator* the novelist Doris Lessing, whose *Golden Notebook* had been published to acclaim in 1962, described *The Sufis* as "a fascinating book" and added "I can't remember being more provoked and stimulated."[37] The review in the *New York Times Book Review* was less favorable, and will be considered below. In the UK, however, *The Sufis* at the end of 1964 carried the recommendation of two of the country's major literary figures, the established Graves and the rising Lessing.

Bennett encouraged everyone at Coombe Springs, his Gurdjieffian center outside London, to read *The Sufis*,[38] and in 1965 the call that Shah had issued in 1963 was formally put by Bennett to a General Meeting of the members of the Institute that owned Coombe Springs. Bennett asked the General Meeting to decide whether or not they would accept Shah as their leader and transfer Coombe Springs to his care. As recommended by Bennett, they mostly voted in favor of this, and ownership of the Coombe Springs property was accordingly transferred from Bennett's Institute to a new body controlled by Shah.[39]

Shah, however, did not in the event establish a community at Coombe Springs. He stopped the Gurdjieff exercises on the grounds that they were too mechanical, and only accepted part of Bennett's former following. Then he asked the remaining residents to move out.[40] Finally, he sold the house and grounds,[41] and moved to Langton House in Kent, also a substantial property, but given its distance from London probably a much less expensive one. Here he lived for the next thirty years, until his death in 1996, with no permanent community in residence, devoting his time to writing, to occasional visits by members of his informal following, and to running a small publishing house, Octagon Press. He also organized lectures under the auspices of the Society for Understanding Fundamental Ideas (SUFI), later known as the Institute for Cultural Research (ICR), which had some 200 members.[42] These activities were well financed: when the Institute for Cultural Research was finally wound up in 2014, it had net assets of almost $4 million,[43] rather more than it had inherited from Bennett's Institute.

The acquisition and subsequent sale of Coombe Springs has often been portrayed by Shah's critics as a deliberate deception turned to financial advantage. This was not the understanding of Bennett himself, however, who wrote of the transaction without recrimination.[44] Quite what Shah's intentions were when Coombe Springs was transferred to him is not known. It is quite possible that he did intend to establish a community, but then found himself unable to do so. It could certainly be argued

that it made little sense to use such a valuable property as Coombe Springs only for occasional gatherings, and that its sale and reinvestment made sense in terms of the objectives of the Institute that retained and used the proceeds of the sale. These proceeds were used to support the Institute's objectives, not just Shah personally. The transaction may, then, have been entirely innocent.

4. Shah's writings

Lessing opened her review of *The Sufis* with the tale of the elephant, told by Shah. As she puts it:

> The citizens of a certain town, mad with curiosity, sneaked a preview of a beast strange to them, an elephant. For safety's sake it was kept in the dark, and they had to rely on their sense of touch. One, finding its trunk, said it was a hosepipe. Another, that it was a fan: he had touched its ear. A third said it was a kind of pillar, while a fourth reported it must be a living throne. Each was sure he was right; yet none had formed a complete picture; and of the part he had felt, could only talk in terms of things he knew.[45]

For Shah and Lessing, this is a Sufi story, and shows how important truths are only partially understood. Sufism was one such truth, and had been partially understood by those Westerners who had written about it, but not by Shah, who became Sufism's authoritative representative. In fact, the story of the elephant is not a particularly Sufi story, and a reader of Lessing's review immediately wrote a letter to the editor to draw attention to the famous print of this scene by the Japanese artist Hokusai (d. 1949).[46] The oldest version of the story of the elephant is in fact found in the Buddhist Pali Canon, recorded in 29 BC.[47] That does not, however, stop the story making a good point in other contexts as well, and even Robert Payne (1911-83), the author of the hostile review of *The Sufis* in the *New York Times Book Review*, liked Shah's use of stories, one of which it retold, and conceded that *The Sufis* was "eminently readable."[48]

Payne was right. *The Sufis* is eminently readable, and the stories are excellent. Many of them are Mulla Nasrudin stories. These are an important part of the folk wisdom of the Muslim world, known universally from the Arab countries[49] through Turkey and Iran to India. They are a genre of short tales, of unknown and multiple authorship, in which Nasrudin normally says or does something apparently ridiculous which, on closer examination, turns out to make complete sense, often in a rather whacky way.

The Sufis sold well and has never been out of print.[50] As well as going into multiple editions in English, it was translated into French in 1972, German in 1976, and then into a number of other

languages, including Arabic and Japanese. It is not, however, Shah's best selling book. Even more successful was his next book, *The Exploits of the Incomparable Mulla Nasrudin*, published in 1966, and translated into French, German, Dutch, Swedish, Spanish, Polish, and Russian. Two other successful Nasrudin collections followed: *The Pleasantries of the Incredible Mullah Nasrudin* in 1968, and *The Subtleties of the Inimitable Mulla Nasrudin* in 1973. *Tales of the Dervishes* (1967) was Shah's single most successful book, which collects over eighty tales by various notable Muslims, mostly Sufis, all comparable to the Nasrudin stories, though often more literary and less earthy. This book was translated into Japanese, Chinese and Thai, as well as most of the major Western languages.

The majority of Shah's books after *The Sufis*, of which there were twenty six, are collections of such stories. Exceptions, like *Learning how to Learn: Psychology and Spirituality in the Sufi Way* (1978), which is based around a series of questions and answers, still contain many stories. *Learning how to Learn* also contains Shah's own understanding of the use of these stories: that instead of arguing about what Sufism was or was not, all that was necessary for people to understand it and its "psychological insights" was to re-tell Sufi stories.[51] Another exception is *The Book of the Book* (1969), an unusual work dedicated to making the point that the contents and container differ. This point is made partly in classic Shah fashion, with short tales of kings and dervishes, and partly by example: the contents of the book stop on page 16, leaving some 200 entirely blank pages to make up the remainder of the container.[52]

The popularity of these stories, in *The Sufis* and in subsequent books, is easy enough to explain. They may be compared to the stories in the *Thousand and One Nights*, a collection which had been even more phenomenally popular, and which Shah had tried to interest Graves in rewriting. Nasrudin had been popular for centuries among Arabs, Turks, Iranians and Indian Muslims, so why not also—once well retold in English—among Westerners? The popularity of Shah's stories and the *Tales of the Dervishes*, then, has something in common with the popularity of the *Thousand and One Nights* in the eighteenth century, with the popularity of *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* some seventy-five years earlier, and with the popularity of Graves's re-tellings of ancient myth and history, to which at one point Shah had indeed proposed that he and Graves should add a re-telling of the *Thousand and One Nights*.

Shah was not only a re-teller of classic stories, however. He indicated that the stories pointed to a coherent whole, which he called "Sufism." He was never entirely explicit about exactly what Sufism was, rather as Gurdjieff was never entirely explicit about what his Fourth Way was, but his list of "subjects dealt with" at the beginning of his *Thinkers of the East* (1971), his most successful collection of stories after *Tales of the Dervishes*, gives a good idea of how he understood what he was teaching:

"Systems of study; the 'Sufi Secret'; problem-solving by non-linear thinking; methods of choosing disciples; special groupings for inner study; use and abuse of literature; different realms of thought..."[53] The list continues much like this for one and a half pages. Ways of thinking appear twice within the first four lines, and are a major theme in Shah's writings. Ways of thinking are also the focus of the 40-minute television documentary that he made in 1970 in the BBC's "One Pair of Eyes" series. This, entitled "The Dreamwalkers," started by stating "Man is asleep," and asking "Must he die before he wakes up?"[54] This echoes the opening of *The Sufis*, which states that "Humanity is asleep, concerned only with what is useless, living in a wrong world." This statement is credited to the twelfth-century Persian poet Abū al-Majd Majdūd Sanā'ī al-Ghaznavī,[55] but its underlying sentiments are those of Gurdjieff, for which it is axiomatic that man is asleep, and therefore needs to develop a new consciousness. In a 1975 interview, Shah explained that Sufism was not "a body of thought" but an "experience [that] has to be provoked in a person," and that his teaching stories allowed people to "burn.. off the[ir] conditioning."[56] In 1978, he wrote "Sufis jolt people from.. 'sleep.'"[57] Again, the teaching is that of Gurdjieff. Similarly, Shah followed Ouspensky and Gurdjieff in focusing on "automatic acts," which he sometimes called "automatism," a term he used in his "Declaration" to Bennett's following.[58] Automatism remained one of the things that Shaw saw Sufism as combatting.[59]

Shah's Sufism, however, was not just the *Thousand and One Nights* and Gurdjieff. He also quoted from classic Sufi writers, and from Nasrudin. The Nasrudin tales are not really Sufi, as they are not claimed by any particular Sufi order, but the folk wisdom that they draw on and encapsulate is often compatible with perspectives that a Sufi might take, presumably because of the impact of centuries of Sufi teachers on the accumulated folk wisdom of the Muslim world. Sometimes, however, Shah pushed his classic Sufi writers too far in the direction of Gurdjieff. According to Shah, for example, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (1058-1111) "pointed out" that "people are conditioned, and that what they call their opinions and beliefs are frequently not their own but implanted by other people and institutions."[60] Al-Ghazālī could hardly have pointed out precisely this, as there was no word for "conditioning" in twelfth-century Arabic, as the concept did not exist, and it is hard to think of words that would have given anything like the modern sense of "implanted." Al-Ghazālī almost certainly noted that the thoughts and behavior of one person are often affected by the thoughts and behavior of another person, but that is not quite the same thing.

When asked in an online survey in 2015 about what they most appreciated in Shah's work, dedicated readers, most of whom had started reading Shah in the 1970s to 1990s, usually when in their thirties, did not fully agree on any one point. Certain themes, however, were repeated. Many respondents recalled that they had felt immediately that Shah's books were different: "I had never

read anything like it" was a phrase used more than once. Some were struck by the "breadth of learning," the "deep knowledge, understanding" that they found. For others, Shah's books were different in that they were not like other "spiritual" books of the time—one thinks here of Castaneda, and of the host of less talented competing writers. Several respondents noted the absence of "mere emotionality" and of sentimentality, of the "trappings" of religion and philosophy, and the presence of the psychological dimension (ways of thought). Many respondents found the books clear and easy to read. Others found the books different because they gave access to an unsuspected world, to "centuries of Arabic thought, philosophy, psychology and spiritual teachings" which "a Western audience ... was almost totally ignorant of." One respondent recalled "how shocking it was to uncover a major and complex system of thought in Islamic guise, where I [had been] led to believe there was nothing progressive."[61)]

Several respondents commented on the use of stories, which were easy to read and even entertaining. Their real point was sometimes not immediately obvious. "At first, I found amusement in the stories, and I treated them like puzzles," remembered one respondent. The puzzles often solved themselves over time. "Finding myself in particular situations I will recall a tale, joke, or comment of Shah's that relates directly to the situation," wrote another respondent. "Passages from the books come back to me from time to time and help me deal with new situations as they occur," wrote another. "The tales, jokes, and historical anecdotes ... embody the observations and insights gained and passed on over the centuries," noted a further respondent. "The patterns contained in their story structures play out again and again in modern society as they did in previous centuries."

For many respondents, Shah's books were more than just books. Together, they formed a coherent corpus, to be read and re-read. "I continue to find new meaning in the books and they reinforce my hope that I am slowly learning how to learn," wrote a respondent who was, at the time of writing, in his seventies. Together, the books "work like a guide for the development of consciousness," showing that there are "other modes of thinking," "another way of seeing the world and ways of being/acting beyond the everyday," beyond everyday assumptions and conditioning. "The books work, initially, without the readers knowledge," noted one respondent. "While reading his work, some alchemy occurs within," noted another.

Shah's achievement, then, was to combine three sources: existing Western conceptions of Sufism as universal wisdom separate from religion, the legacy of Gurdjieff, and the literature and anecdote of the Muslim world. This is the construction of Sufism that he presented to millions of readers. Exactly as Hardman said of Castaneda, Shah "was the storyteller who was able to retell the old stories to capture imaginations." And, again, "the stories had been told before but never with such persuasive

force." They were told not just with force, but also so as to present a coherent worldview.

5. Followers and opponents

Had Shah followed the normal pattern among Neo-Sufis of combining writing with leading followers, his following would probably have been large, as by the mid 1970s he was receiving some 10,000 letters a year, which included many requests to meet him.[62] He argued that he could not both write and lead many followers at the same time,[63] but many others have managed to combine these two activities, which in some ways come together naturally, as research and teaching do. Shah did not, however, establish a formal following, and criticized those who, inspired by his writings, were sufficiently "religious-minded" to go in search of Sufi groups and teachers, whether (as has been noted) "the often grotesque versions of Sufism in the East" or "guru-ist cults of the West."[64] He regarded the human desire for "meetings, groups and classes" as childish, and considered that Sufi groups that indulged this desire had deteriorated into cults.[65] Sufi rituals, he thought, were "automatic processes" of no value.[66] He was, it seems, convinced of the superiority of knowledge over practice.

Despite this, Shah did have a few followers. A few lived in or near the village of Langton,[67] but most visited only at weekends, by invitation; Shah reserved his weeks for writing.[68] Small groups would arrive, engage in communal physical work on the Saturday, and then move for dinner to a former barn on the estate known as "The Elephant" (a reference to the story retold above) and then gather to listen to Shah speak until after midnight.[69]

Shah also had a small following in North America. A US organization, the Institute for the Study of Human Knowledge (ISHK), was established in 1969 under the leadership of Robert Ornstein, then a postdoctoral fellow in psychology.[70] There was also a Shah group in Denver, Colorado, under Leonard Lewin, an electrical engineer who taught at the University of Colorado.[71]

A further group was established by Shah's brother Omar, who began to distance himself from the Gurdjieffian tradition in 1968, replacing the Gurdjieffian term "Work" with the more neutral term "Tradition," and in 1977 he formally separated himself from Shah, and introduced such Islamic Sufi practices as *dhikr* and prayers in Arabic.[72] Omar's following[73] did not become fully Islamic in its practice, however. An account from the 1990s of a substantial center in Arcos de la Frontera, Spain reports Islamic forms of practice combined with heavy consumption of alcohol.[74]

Shah's most famous followers were Graves and Lessing. Graves was important at the start of his career, as we have seen. Lessing was important later. Her *The Golden Notebook* was widely read and much respected. One of its themes was disenchantment with, and disengagement from, the Communist

Party, which Lessing had herself joined and left, unlike her husband Gottfried Lessing (1914-79), who went on (after their divorce) to become a senior member of East Germany's ruling party. Another theme was limitations on women in English society, and this was the theme for which the book became best known. Lessing later complained that "it became the property of the feminists," despite the fact that so far as she was concerned, "it was fundamentally a political book."[75] After finishing *The Golden Notebook* Lessing found she "could no longer accept the contemporary package of materialism, socialism, and atheism," and went looking for something else.[76] Like many writers before her, she read her way through the Christian and non-Christian spiritual classics, concluding that "all religions and types of mysticism say the same thing in different words." At this point, she read *The Sufis*, wrote to Shah, and was accepted by him as a pupil.[77]

Lessing remained a pupil of Shah until Shah's death. She promoted his work in three main ways. Firstly, she introduced Shah to her publisher, Tom Maschler (b. 1933) at Jonathan Cape,[78] who subsequently published and promoted Shah's books. Secondly, she periodically wrote glowing reviews of Shah's work in various newspapers and magazines, accepting and repeating his claims to authority, and thus adding to his authenticity and legitimacy. Thirdly, she referred to Shah and Sufism so often that anyone seriously interested in her work inevitably became interested in Shah as well. This is visible in the number of scholarly books and articles devoted to Lessing and Sufism. What was true for professional devotees of Lessing was presumably also true for amateur devotees. Many readers of Lessing must have become readers of Shah.

Another famous writer who was influenced by Shah, though never a formal follower of Shah, was the Brazilian author Paulo Coelho (b. 1947).[79] The rebirth of the central character, Veronika, in Coelho's *Veronika Decides to Die* is preceded by the advice of a Sufi teacher who bases his lesson around "Nasrudin, the great master of the Sufi tradition."[80] As Nasrudin is regarded as a Sufi primarily by Shah, whose spelling Coelho also follows, Shah must be Coelho's source. Nasrudin not only features in *Veronika*, but also makes periodic appearances on Coelho's blog.[81] A full study of Coelho's work would be required to establish the exact extent of Shah's influence, but it is certainly there. Strangely, given Coelho's vast readership, there is at present almost no critical or scholarly literature on him.

It is somewhat easier to discern the influence that Coelho's novels might have on their readers than it is to speculate about Lessing's possible influence, because Coelho's message is more explicit. The subtitle of the English translation of his most popular book, *The Alchemist*, is *A Fable About Following Your Dream*, and to follow your dream is the essence of Coelho's message. It is much the advice that the Sufi teacher gives Veronika: "Allow the real 'I' to reveal itself," he tells the group Veronika has

joined. "What is the real 'I'?" asks Veronica. "It's what you are, not what others make of you," replies the teacher.[82] This answer is in the tradition of Gurdjieff and Shah, not of Islamic Sufism, which emphasises gaining mastery over the *nafs*, not promoting it.

Criticism of Idries Shah grew with time. As has been mentioned, the original 1964 review of *The Sufis* in the *New York Times Book Review* was less than positive. The reviewer complained that the book was "inclined to see Sufi influence everywhere" and made fun of Shah's suggestion that Shakespeare might be Shaykh-pir (a combination of Arab and Persian terms for a Sufi master). While Payne conceded that "there is a good deal of information to be derived from the book," this was "in spite of so many incursions into the higher lunacy, magic, witchcraft, and numerology."[83] *The Sufis* indeed made extraordinary claims for Sufi influence everywhere, including the Carbonari, the alchemists, and the Order of the Garter,[84] Britain's premier order of chivalry. There were also many incursions into what might be termed "higher lunacy," not only in the familiar form of numerology, but also in the less familiar form of Arabic grammar. Shah drew on the remarkable variety of meanings that might be derived from a single Arabic tri-literal root, some of which are logically related, and some of which are startlingly contrasting. For those who did not know Arabic, this may have given an air of learning to the book. For those who do know Arabic, it is faintly absurd, and for those who know their Arabic dictionaries, it is clear that Shah was simply using J. G. Hava's Arabic-English dictionary of 1915.

Criticism of Shah grew after 1967, when a new translation of *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám,* a work that had been extremely popular in the West at the end of the nineteenth century, was published under the joint names of Robert Graves and of Shah's brother, Omar Ali Shah. The translation was presented as their joint work, Graves having cast into verse what Omar had translated from the Persian. It was also presented as a vast improvement on the original translations by Edward Fitzgerald (1809-83) that had originally made the work so popular. Firstly, Graves and Omar recognized Omar Khayyam (1048-1131) for the Sufi he was, unlike Fitzgerald, who Graves attacked very severely in a long introduction entitled "The Fitz-Omar Cult." Secondly, Graves and Omar were working from the original twelfth-century manuscript, rather than the later and defective manuscript that Fitzgerald had used.[85] The new translation was not well received, however. One reviewer described it as "a prosy *New English Bible* sort of Khayyam,"[86] referring to the generally unloved 1961 new translation of the Bible into more faithful, but definitely unpoetic, English. More importantly, those who knew classical Persian literature immediately doubted the claim of a new twelfth-century manuscript, especially since that manuscript seemed suspiciously close to Fitzgerald's text. Public controversy followed, with Graves coming under attack from Laurence Elwell-Sutton (1912-84), a leading

Persianist at Edinburgh University, who identified the translation's source as an 1899 work on Fitzgerald's translation by Edward Heron-Allen (1861-1943).[87] The reason the allegedly new manuscript resembled the Fitzgerald's translation was that it was, in fact, actually based on the Fitzgerald translation.

This controversy was painful for Graves, who wrote to Idries Shah that it did him "a great deal of harm," and who took the Shah brothers' failure to silence critics such as Elwell-Sutton by producing the original twelfth-century manuscript as an inexplicable betrayal of their long friendship.[88] It is likely that the manuscript was in fact an invention of Omar's, but that Idries felt he had to support his brother, despite his friendship with Graves. For a follower of the Shah brothers, however, the controversy did not discredit them. It merely showed that, unable to object to the basic argument that Omar Khayyam was an unrecognized Sufi, the academic establishment focused instead on petty details about the provenance of manuscripts.[89]

When revealing the 1899 origin of the allegedly twelfth-century manuscript of Khayyam in a scholarly journal, Elwell-Sutton observed standard academic courtesies. In later articles in general publications, however, he was much less restrained. In 1970, he described Shah's works in the *New York Review of Books* as "merely trivial," "a schoolboy essay," and "a muddle of platitudes, irrelevancies, and plain mumbo-jumbo."[90] In 1975, he accused Shah of "a well-planned build-up" of the "attempt to upgrade [a] rather undistinguished lineage," and drew attention to the transaction involving the acquisition and sale of Coombe Springs and the purchase of Langton House in a way that implied dishonesty. In Elwell-Sutton's view, Shah's only achievement was to acquire such knowledge of Sufism as was available in commonly available reference works, and use it to produce a pseudo-Sufism fitted to the needs of the intellectual of his time, who "is usually incapable of swallowing the idea of a transcendent God more omnipotent than himself."[91]

Elwell-Sutton was right in his identification of the source of the alleged twelfth-century manuscript, but went somewhat too far in his other criticisms. As we have seen, the Coombe Springs transaction may have been entirely innocent. Shah was indeed consistently presented as the non-existent Grand Sheikh of the Sufis, from "Solo to Mecca" in 1961 to his obituary in *The Daily Telegraph* in 1996.[92] He was also presented as an Afghan aristocrat, for example in the American popular magazine *Psychology Today*, which described him as "a witty, urbane man whose family palaces are in Afghanistan" and added that "Shah is adviser to several monarchs and heads of state—purely in an unofficial capacity."[93] From the very beginning in *Destination Mecca*, Shah presents himself as a Sayed and, after 1957 describes himself as "*The* Sayed Idries Shah" (my emphasis), a style almost unique to him, treating "Sayed" as English custom treats such titles as "Honourable" or, sometimes

"Lord." In fact, the title is closer to the French *Monsieur*, and though it is given only to descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, there are several million people in the Muslim world who trace their descent from the Prophet. There is no record of Shah advising monarchs or heads of state, and no family palaces in Afghanistan. Shah's background, however, was not as undistinguished as Elwell-Sutton suggested. He was descended from an Afghan, Muhammad Jan Fishan Khan (d. 1864), who had moved to India at the end of First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-42), and had remained loyal to the British during the Indian Rebellion of 1857, as a reward for which he had been granted what a British semi-official source described as "an important estate," covering about 28 square miles, at Sardhana in Uttar Pradesh, along with the title *nawab*, a form of peerage.[94] Elwell-Sutton, then, went somewhat too far.

Idries Shah died in 1996. His following dispersed, Langton Place was sold, and the proceeds transferred to the Idries Shah Foundation,[95] which now publishes and promotes his books.

6. Conclusion

Shah's work and impact are of major significance in the history of the Western reception of Sufism. From 1964 until the 1990s, when interest in his work began to decline, millions read his books, and many were changed by them. They thought they were learning about Sufism, which sometimes they were, as Shah's books included extracts from classic Sufi authors, and other classic Sufi authors were published in translation by Octagon Press. Often, however, they were learning not Sufism but the folk wisdom of the Muslim world, which sometimes overlapped with Sufism, and sometimes overlapped, as in the case of the story of the elephant, with the folk wisdom of humanity. Beyond this, they were also sometimes learning something of the teachings of Gurdjieff. One thing they were not learning about was Islam.

Idries Shah was to Sufism as Carlos Castaneda was to Shamanism, an immensely successful interpreter and popularizer, whose work met the needs of the time. In Islamic terms, he was not really a Sufi, but then neither was the only other Western Neo-Sufi to rival him in fame or influence, his father's one-time friend Inayat Khan. Islamic Neo-Sufism was a phenomenon that began to develop during Shah's lifetime, but it was a later phenomenon.

Shah's success may be ascribed partly to the needs of the time, and partly to his combination of Sufism, folk wisdom, and Gurdjieff. In addition, Shah was good at promoting his work, and at promoting himself. Graves launched his work, and Lessing pushed it. And even though it drew criticism or even ridicule, Shah's self-presentation as Grand Sheikh of the Sufis and as exiled Afghan

aristocrat also helped promote his work.

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* This article includes parts of the draft of a chapter that has been accepted for publication by Oxford University Press in the forthcoming book *Western Sufism: Origins and Development, 833-1968* by Mark Sedgwick, due for publication in 2016

Notes

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4) The most recent treatment is in Olav Hammer, "Sufism for Westerners," in *Sufism in Europe and North America*, David Westerlund, ed. (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 127-43. Hammer devotes pp. 136-38 to Shah.
5) L. P. Elwell-Sutton, "Sufism and Pseudo-Sufism," *Encounter* 44, no. 5 (May 1975), pp. 9-17.
6) Alan M. Olson, "From Shaman to Mystic: An Interpretation of the Castaneda Quartet," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 61, no. 1 (Spring 1978), p. 48.
7) Charlotte E. Hardman, "He may be lying but what he says is true': the sacred tradition of don Juan as reported by Carlos Castaneda, anthropologist, trickster, guru, allegorist." In *The Invention of Sacred Tradition*, James R. Lewis and Olav Hammer, eds (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

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8) Zia Inayat-Khan, A Hybrid Sufi Order at the Crossroads of Modernity: The Sufi Order and Sufi Movement of Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan, Unpublished PhD dissertation, Duke University, 2006, pp. 103, 105, 106.
9) James Moore, "Neo-Sufism: The Case of Idries Shah," *Religion Today* 3:3 (1986), p. 5.
10) Tahir Shah and Leon Flamholc, interviews, May and June 2015.
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12) Shah, *Secret Lore of Magic*, pp. 11, 212.
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16) Frederic Lamond, *Fifty Years of Wicca* (Sutton Mallet, England: Green Magic, 2004), p. 19.
17) Robert Graves, "Centaurs' Food," in *Food for Centaurs: Stories, Talks, Critical Studies, Poems by Robert Graves* (New York: Doubleday, 1960), pp. 257-282. Michel Pharand, "The Mythophile and the Mycophile: Robert Graves and R. Gordon Wasson," *Gravesiana: the Journal of the Robert Graves Society* 1:2 (1996), pp. 205-215.
18) Shah to Graves, January 1961, quoted in Richard Perceval Graves, *Robert Graves and the White Goddess 1940-85* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1995), p. 326.
19) *Between Moon and Moon: Selected Letters of Robert Graves, 1946-1972*, Paul O'Prey, ed. (London: Hutchinson, 1984), p. 214.
20) To judge from the tone of many of Graves' letters to Shah in *Between Moon and Moon*. This is confirmed by Richard Perceval Graves, *Robert Graves*, p. 326.
21) *The Secret Lore of Alchemy* was advertised as "forthcoming" in the 1958 US edition of *The Secret Lore of Magic* (p. 2), but no such book was ever published.
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23) Omar M. Burke [pseud.], "Solo to Mecca," *Blackwood's Magazine* 290 (1961), pp. 481-495.
24) William James Thompson, *J.G.Bennett's Interpretation of The Teachings of G.I.Gurdjief: A Study of Transmission in The Fourth Way*, Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Lancaster, 1995, p. 538.
25) Augy Hayter, *Fictions and Factions* (Reno: Tractus Books, 2002), p. 187. Hayter is a somewhat problematic source, as some of the material in his book is distinctly bizarre. His account of the 1960s, however, is internally consistent, and fits with what little is known from other sources.
26) Hayter, *Fictions and Factions*, pp. 187-193.
27) John G. Bennett, *Witness: The Autobiography of John Bennett* (London: Turnstone Books, 1975), p. 309. John G. Bennett, *Concerning Subud* (London: Hodden & Stoughton, 1958. Reprinted,

Undiscovered Worlds Press, 2007), p. 23.

28) Idries Shah, "Declaration of the People of the Tradition," reproduced in Bennett, *Witness*, p. 356-58.
29) Shah, "Declaration," p. 358.
30) Idries Shah, *The Sufis* (1964; London: Idries Shah Foundation, 2014), p. xiii.
31) Robert Graves, Introduction to Idries Shah, *The Sufis* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969).
32) Graves, Introduction, pp. ix-x.
33) Shah, *The Sufis* (2014), pp. 31-32, 51.
34) Graves, Introduction, p. xx.
35) "Sardhana Estate," *The Imperial Gazetteer of* India (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), vol. 22, pp. 104-05.
36) "Ancient Secrets," *The Times* March 9, 1964, p. 12.
37) Doris Lessing, "An Elephant in the Dark," review of Idries Shah, *The Sufis*, *The Spectator* September 18, 1964, p. 373.
38) Leon Flamholc, interview, June 2015.
39) Bennett, *Witness*, pp. 361-62.
40) Leon Flamholc, interview, June 2015.
41) Bennett, *Witness*, pp. 361-62. The sale is reported to have been for around £100,000, about $2.5 m. in 2015 terms.
42) Tahir Shah, interview, May 2015.
43) £2.6 million, according to ICC Financial Analysis Report, January 3, 2015. Available from LexisNexis.
44) Bennett, *Witness*, pp. 361-62.
45) Lessing, "Elephant in the Dark," p. 373.
46) High Gordon Porteus, Letter, *The Spectator* September 29, 1964, p. 401.
47) *The Udāna and the Itivuttaka: Two Classics from the Pali Canon*, trans. John D. Ireland (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1997), pp. 82-84.
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49) In Egypt, he is known as Goha.
50) After 2014, Octagon became the Idries Shah Foundation, publishing only Shah's books. In the US, *The Sufis* remained in print with a trade publisher, Anchor (part of Random House).
51) Shah, *Learning how to Learn*, pp. 13-14.
52) Idries Shah, *The Book of the Book* (London: Octagon Press, 1969).
53) Shah, *Learning how to Learn* (1978; London: Octagon, 2002), p. 13
54) "Dreamwalkers," *One Pair of Eyes*, BBC Television (December 19, 1970). Available on YouTube at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1v0oGh7mTV0.
55) Shah, *The Sufis* (2014), p. xi.
56) Idries Shah, Interview with Elizabeth Hall, "The Sufi Tradition," *Psychology Today* July 1975, pp. 54-55.
57) Shah, *Learning how to Learn*, p. 48.

58) Shah, ”Declaration,” p. 357.
59) Shah, *Learning how to Learn*, p. 127.
60) Shah, *Learning how to Learn*, p. 149.
61) Quotations from an online survey carried out by the author in January 2015. This was completed by almost 20% of 1,000 English-speaking Shah enthusiasts identified by Facebook and contacted by means of a Facebook advertisement. 73% were university graduates, and a remarkable number had a postgraduate qualification: 36% of male respondents, and fully 58% of female respondents. To some extent, of course, this reflects the fact that the better-educated are more likely to spend time writing short essays to help a research project.
62) Shah, *Learning how to Learn*, pp. 77, 97.
63) Shah, *Learning how to Learn*, p. 97.
64) Shah, *Learning how to Learn*, p. 50.
65) Shah, *Learning how to Learn*, pp. 294-96.
66) Shah, *Learning how to Learn*, p. 276.
67) Anonymous participant, interviewed in 2013.
68) Tahir Shah, interview, May 2015.
69) Anonymous participant, interviewed in 2013. Leon Flamholc, interviewed in 2015.
70) “Robert Ornstein, Biographical Information.” Available http://www.robertornstein.com/biography.html. Accessed February 3, 2015.
71) Mohamed Abouzahra and Edward Kuester, “In Memory of Prof. Leonard Lewin,” *IEEE Microwave Magazine* February 2008, p. 113.
72) Hayter, *Fictions and Factions*, pp. 199, 201.
73) Omar spoke Spanish, and his following seems to have become mostly hispanophone. There are reports of followers in Latin America in Hayter, *Fictions and Factions*, p. 200.
74) Dirk Campbell, “Impressions of La Zahara,” dirkcampbell.co.uk, 1999. Available http://www.dirkcampbell.co.uk/Impressions_of_La_Zahara.html. Accessed January 22, 2015.
75) Doris Lessing, quoted in Nigel Farndale, “Doris Lessing: Her Last Telegraph Interview,” *The Telegraph* November 17, 2013, available http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/10455494/Doris-Lessing-her-last-Telegraph-interview.html.
76) Doris Lessing, untitled sound recording beginning “To be political is to be on the side of the angels,” available https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OixOR2DpKA
77) Lessing, “To be polititical.”
78) Tom Maschler, *Publisher* (London: Picador, 2005), p. 72.
79) This section draws on “The Reception of Sufi and Neo-Sufi Literature.” In *Sufis in Western Society: Global Networking and Locality*, Ron Geaves, Markus Dressler, and Gritt M. Klinkhammer, ed.s. London: Routledge, 2009, pp. 180-97.
80) Paulo Coelho, *Veronika Decides to Die* (London: HarperCollins, 1999), p. 87.
81) Four in 2007. http://paulocoelhoblog.com, accessed November 3, 2007.
82) Coelho, *Veronika*, p. 92.

83) Payne, “Mystics in White,” p. 24.
84) Shah, *The Sufis* (2014), pp. 217, 233, 265-66.
85) Robert Graves, “The Fitz-Omar Cult,” in *The Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayaam*, Robert Graves and Omar Ali-Shah ed. and trans. (London: Cassell, 1967), pp. 1, 3.
86) Martin Dodsworth in *The Listener*, quoted in “Robert Graves 1895–1985,” *Poetry Foundation*, available http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/robert-graves, accessed January 22, 2015.
87) L. P. Elwell-Sutton, “The Omar Khayyam Puzzle,” *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* 55:2 (1968), pp. 167-178, pp. 176-79. Once the two texts are placed side by side, the correspondence is obvious.
88) Robert Graves to Idries Shah, November 11, 1970, in *Between Moon and Moon*, pp. 282-83.
89) Hayter, *Fictions and Factions*, pp. 197-198.
90) L.P. Elwell-Sutton, “Mystic-Making,” *New York Review of Books* July 2, 1970. NYRB archive at nybooks.com.
91) Elwell-Sutton, “Sufism and Pseudo-Sufism,” pp. 12-16.
92) Obituary of Idries Shah, *The Daily Telegraph* December 7, 1996, available http://web.archive.org/web/20000525070609/http://www.telegraph.co.uk/et?ac=001301712421770&rtmo=qMuJX999&atmo=99999999&pg=/et/96/12/7/ebshah07.html, accessed February 3, 2015. Other obituaries described him merely as a writer on Sufism. “Idries Shah, 72, Indian-Born Writer of Books on Sufism,” *The New York Times* December 2, 1996, p. B12. David Wade and Edward Campbell, “Obituary: Idries Shah: To Teach The Way of the Sufi,” *The Guardian* December 3, 1996, p. 15. Robert Cecil, “Obituary: Idries Shah,” *The Independent* November 26, 1996, p. 16.
93) Elizabeth Hall, “At Home in east and West: A Sketch of Idries Shah,” *Psychology Today* July 1975, p. 56.
94) “Sardhana Estate,” vol. 22, pp. 104-05. This confirms the origins of the Sardhana family, not Ikbal Ali Shah’s descent from it, but that descent seems very likely, as only wealthy Indian families were in a position to send children to study in Britain in 1914.
95) Tahir Shah, interview, May 2015.

A Response to Prof. Mark Sedgwick: "Neo-Sufism in the 1960s: Idries Shah"

Teruaki Moriyama

Prof. Sedgwick discussed one of the most successful figures of the non-Islamic universal 'Neo-Sufism' movement in the 20th century Western societies, Idrīs Shāh. Prof. Sedgwick analyzed his life, books, promotion, and criticism against him. Through these analyses, Prof. Sedgwick considered the nature of his thoughts and activities, and concluded that his success, which prevailed over criticism from orientalist scholars, is ascribed to the following five points: (1) he responded to the social needs for alternative religiosity in the Western societies, (2) it successfully combined Sufism, folk wisdom and other alternative religiosity as like Gurdjieff, (3) managed well to promot himself and his famous followers, (4) utilized publisher, and (5) validated himself by using names of universities and self-presentation as Grand Shaykh of Ṣūfīs originating from an exiled Afghan aristocratic family, which gave him the oriental exotic mystic atmosphere popular among Western people.

Prof. Sedgwick's paper provides a lot of knowledge on this outstanding Westernized non-Islamic 'Neo-Ṣūfī', Idrīs Shāh, who is not well known among Japanese researchers of Islamic studies. The Japanese academic society of Islamic studies has paid some attention to Western acceptance of Sufism as a sort of Oriental mystical spirituality, which is similar to Zen and Yoga, but not as ~~a~~ part of Islam religion. However, as yet, there is not much progress in Japan in serious research on 'Neo-Sufism' in the West.

In addition to the limitation of knowledge and the underdevelopment of research, the difference in usage of the term of 'Neo-Sufism' might strengthen Japanese researchers' impression that this lecture suggests something novel. Japanese researchers devote the term of 'Neo-Sufism' to a form of Taṣawwuf or Sufism that claims strict adherence to the Prophetic Sunna and Ḥadīth, represented by the argumentation and activity of Shāh Walī-Allāh (d. 1763). At the same time, they also use the term to refer to relatively new established Ṭarīqas or Ṣūfī orders. Ṭarīqas such as Naqshbandīya Mujaddidīya or Sanūsīya have been established since the 18th century and attempted to exclude practices deviating from Sharī'a. They have played important role in the purification movement of Islam. Their organizations are well constructed as compared with the more traditional Ṭarīqas. They utilized these organizations to motivate Muslim people towards resistance against Western

colonialism. This is the general understanding and usage of the term 'Neo-Sufism' in Japan.[1)]

That difference in meaning and usage of the term 'Neo-Sufism' between Prof. Sedgwick and Japanese researchers clarifies the fact that two opposing tendencies have been founded in modern-contemporary Ṣūfism. One has attempted to separate Sufism from Islam and to transform it into universal wisdom in contemporary Western societies, whereas the other has made efforts to adapt Sufism to the strict Sharī'a oriented *al-Islām* in modern-contemporary Muslim societies.

Prof. Sedgwick's analysis of Idrīs Shāh makes us aware that his 'Neo-Sufism' is very typical of alternative religiosity and has many elements similar to other alternative religiosities. For instance, one of the most powerful Japanese alternative form of religiosity rooted in Buddhism, Soka-Gakkai, interprets the words of great medieval Buddhist priests as universal wisdom, and claims harmony with other religions. Their spiritual leader has accumulated many titles of honorary professor or honorary doctor from universities all over the world. He holds interviews with famous leaders of different religions. They also have their own press and publisher to promote their thoughts and achievements extensively.[2)] The strategies that Idrīs Shāh used in order to spread his 'Neo-Sufism' into Western societies were very typical of the alternative religiosity in modernized societies, i.e. citing words and concepts attributed to traditional religious literature as universal folk wisdom, interchanging with other religiosity, keeping apart from single traditional religion, using the authority of universities to authorize their claims and achievements, and advertising through publications.

On the other hand, when we look at Idrīs Shāh's 'Neo-Sufism' from the perspective of Islamic studies, we seemingly receive the impression that it can be hardly categorized as 'Taṣawwuf' or 'Sufism', because he separated it from Islam. Nevertheless, we cannot say that he was not an heir to the ethos of 'Taṣawwuf' either, because, as Prof. Sedgwick pointed out, Idrīs Shāh did not deny Islam, neither did he deny that he himself was a Muslim.

Not only in the case of Idrīs Shāh, but also for Ṣufīs generally, relations between Sufism and Islam, and the position of Sufism in or toward Islam have been various and problematic, though it is obvious that Sufism has been involved in Islam since its emergence. Indeed, in the history of Sufism, Ṣūfīs who did not emphasize their Muslimhood were not rare.

At the level of Islamic mystical thinking, it is very essential for the Ṣūfī to be a Muslim. Ṣūfī thinkers have composed an indispensable part of Islamic intellectuals since the 10th century. At the level of the Ṣūfī practices, however, Ṣūfīs were not and still are not seen only as Muslims, but also as persons blessed with having supernatural powers beyond boarders between Islam and other religions. It is often argued that the inter-religious or syncretic nature of Ṣūfīs made a great contribution to the spread of Islām into the populace, especially in Southern and South-Eastern Asia as well as Sub-

Sahara Africa. Therefore, it is often argued that among Muslims this syncretism has caused strong criticism against Sufism, since the 18th century and until today. While 'Wahhābism' is recognized as the most remarkable example of this criticism, some Ṣūfī leaders, like Aḥmad ibn Idrīs (d. 1873), had criticized the syncretic nature of existing traditional Sufism. This criticism of traditional Sufism from within Ṣūfīs themselves has developed into the new type of Ṭarīqa, which is called 'Neo-Sufism' in Japanese Islamic studies.

Such elastic nature observed in the history of Sufism might allow us to see the Ṣūfīs as activists who devote themselves to spreading their practice and thoughts in given social situations. In order to accomplish their devotion, they continue to devise different practices and thoughts that they consider appropriate to the different social situations surrounding them. We should be aware of the fact that Sufism cannot be reduced to a single fixed concept. What we call Sufism consists of practices and thoughts that persons who recognize themselves as Ṣūfīs keep on changing according to changes occurring in the societies they inhabit.

In this sense, the contrastive tendencies categorized by researchers under the same name of 'Neo-Sufism', that is Idrīs Shāh's universal Sufism and strict Sharī'a observing Ṭarīqa, can be understood as two faces of accommodation by Ṣūfīs, to the societies in which they live. The former, that is living in Western societies, took advantage of the fact that new alternative religiosity came into fashion. The latter, acting in 'oriental' Muslim societies, has been forced to cope with criticism from the purification or Salafist movements of Islam as well as Western colonialism and orientalism.

Based on this comment, I would like to raise a question regarding the relationship between Idrīs Shāh's 'Neo-Sufism' and Muslims. In his paper Prof. Sedgwick repeatedly pointed out that Idrīs Shāh never described his Sufism as a part of Islam, and he succeeded in making his Sufism accepted as universal spirituality apart from Islam, among Western people. This point of the argument is very clear and well proved. On the other hand, how did and do Muslims see his Neo-Sufism? Are they ignorant of it altogether? Or do some Muslims who have some knowledge of it praise or criticize it? Especially nowadays when the number of Muslim immigrants and their children in Western societies are increasing, is there any evidence of influence of Idrīs Shāh's 'Neo-Sufism' on those Muslims living and growing in Western societies and if so, what is their reaction toward it? And, is there a case of Western native people being led to convert to Islam through acceptance of Shāh's Non-Islamic universal 'Neo-Sufism'?

Notes

1) Kazuo Otsuka, “Neo-Sfisum,” in: Kazuo Otsuka et. al. eds., *Iwanami Encyclopedia of Islam*, Iwanami-Shoten, 2002（大塚和夫「ネオ・スーフィズム」大塚和夫他編『岩波イスラーム辞典』岩波書店、2002年）. The Japanese understanding and usage of the term of ‘Neo-Sufism’ seem to be based on the works of Nehemia Levtzion, John Voll, and R. S. O’Fahey, as Prof. Sedgwick pointed out in the discussion. Nehemia Levtzion and John O. Voll eds., *Eighteenth-Century Renewal and Reform in Islam* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1987). John Voll, *Islam, Continuity and Change in the Modern World* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994). R. S. O’Fahey, *The Enigmatic Saint: Ahmad Ibn Idris and Idrisi Tradition* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1994).
2) SOKAnet: 創価学会公式サイトhttp://www.sokanet.jp/index.html, (accessed August 19, 2015).

第 8 回 CISMOR ユダヤ学会議
The 8th CISMOR Annual Conference on Jewish Studies

「カバラーとスーフィズム
現代におけるユダヤ教とイスラームの秘儀的信仰と実践」
Kabbalah and Sufism: Esoteric Beliefs and Practices
in Judaism and Islam in Modern Times

Part III

Religious Issues in Historical and Textual Perspectives
Young scholars' workshop

Communication between the Gods and the Hittite King

Hajime Yamamoto

1. Introduction

In the kingdom of the Hittites, which flourished in central Anatolia in the second millennium B.C., the king was thought to be the mediator between the divine world and the state he dominated. Taggar-Cohen (2014: 13) defines the role of the Hittite king as follows: "According to Hittite legal thought the gods chose the king as their deputy, to rule their land. He was judged by the way in which he fulfilled his service to the gods. A Hittite king would term himself as the god's priest – in Hittite SANGA or *šankunni-* and would be sure to take part in all the important festivals in the temples of the holy cities in the vicinity of the capital Ḫattuša." The Hittite king ruled the kingdom on behalf of the gods, and was responsible for leading his people.

The king was a mediator and made known the gods' demands through a document. The king's role as such can be deduced from the usages of the Hittite noun *išḫiul-*. This noun means a legal document by which the king imposed obligations upon his subjects, usually translated as instructions for state officials or a treaty with a foreign ruler.[1)]

Originally, *išḫiul-* was the abstract noun derived from the verb *išḫai-/išḫiya-*, which figuratively means, "to impose a burden upon someone."[2)] It denotes a tight and forceful bond to a burden, as if the person it was imposed on felt it impossible to escape from it of his own will. Accordingly, we can assume the meaning of *išḫiul-* as "something that imposes a burden on a person," which implies the vertical relationship between the imposer and the person(s) imposed upon.[3)] Therefore, the vertical relationship this noun represents can be not only the relation between the Hittite king and his people, but also the relation between the gods and the people.[4)]

Some usages of this noun show that its primary meaning is "the law of the gods", that is the gods' order that rules their worship. This meaning is seen in a prayer of the Hittite queen Puduḫepa.

KUB[5)] 21.27 ii 3-4 (CTH[6)]384=Prayer of Puduḫepa to the Sungoddess of Arinna)

(3) *nu-un-na-aš-kán* šu-*me-el ŠA* DINGIR^{MEŠ} *iš-ḫi-ú-ul* (4) [*ha-az-z*]*i-wi QA-TAM-MA kat-ta a-ú-um-me-ni*

"And we will observe your, the gods' law and [ritual] likewise."[7)]

In order to impose the law of the gods, the king as mediator had to instruct the people of the gods'

demands. We can suppose that he issued the texts titled *išḫiul-* in which he stipulated the obligations of the people based on divine demand. An *išḫiul-* text was, therefore, a means of mediation for the king to administer his kingdom.

If this interpretation is correct, the next question is: how did the Hittite king "receive" the original *išḫiul-*, or the law of the gods? We are unable as yet to fully understand the whole process by which the Hittite king communicated with the gods. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to present the ways by which the gods and the king communicated. For the sake of clarification, this paper will mainly deal with the expressions and the contexts found in the Hittite prayers and oracle texts, especially where the noun *išḫiul-* occurs.

Based on the usages of this noun, there were at least two ways for the Hittite king to "receive" the law of the gods: through a dream or through an oracle. On the one hand, according to narratives by the Hittite kings, the gods sometimes appeared in the king's dream and told him what he should do. On the other hand, oracles were also consulted in order to understand the divine will, such as why the gods' anger had caused a natural disaster or the king's illness.

2. Communication through Dreams

As mentioned above, the gods were thought to be continually establishing *išḫiul-* their law. At the beginning of the text known as "Prayer of a King to the Sun god" (CTH 374), the Hittite king invokes the Sun god asking him to transfer his plea to his own personal god.

> KUB 31.130 obv. 1'-3' (CTH374.I=The Prayer of the King to the Sungod)
>
> (1') [^{d}UTU-*e šar-ku* LUGAL-*u-e*] ⌜DUMU ^{d}NIN.GAL⌝ [*iš-ḫ*]*i-*⌜*ú-uḫ* ⌝ *š*[*a-ak-l*]*a-in* / (2') [*zi-ik-pát* ^{d}UTU-*uš ḫa-an-t*]*e-eš-ki-ši na-aš-ta* KUR-⌜*ya*⌝ *iš-tar-na* / (3') [*zi-ik-pát aš-ša-nu*]-*wa-an-za* ^{d}UTU-*uš* <*ḫa-an-da-an-za*>(?) DINGIR-*uš zi-ik*
>
> "[O Sun-god, mighty king], son of Nikkal, [you alone, O Sun-g]od, are [establi]shing the [l] aw (and) the c[us]tom, and in the land [you alone] are [widely wor]shipped, you are the <just> god, O Sun-god!"[8]

Here the Hittite king addresses the Sun god as the one who is establishing *išḫiul-* "the law" and *šaklai-,* "the custom".[9] According to the following context where the detailed procedures of the ritual for the god are mentioned, we can suppose that the *išḫiul-* is the principle rule that determines how human beings should treat the gods. Its coordinated noun *šaklai-* seems to mean the custom for worshipping them based on the law of *išḫiul-*.

In another prayer, the Hittite king asks the gods to tell him of their demands through a dream. The text known as "Second Plague Prayer of Muršili II" (CTH 378) preserves such a request.

KUB 14.8 rev.34'-36' (CTH 378.II.A=The Second Plague Prayer of Muršili II) (34') *na-aš-ma-kán ma-a-an* (35') [*am-m*]*u-uk-ma ku-it-ki šar-ni-ik-ze-el ḫa-an-ti iš-ḫi-ya-at-te-e-ni* (36') [*na-a*]*t-mu te-eš-ḫa-az me-mi-eš-ten nu-uš-ma-ša-at pí-iḫ-ḫi*

"Or if however, you (the gods) separately impose some kind of compensation on [m]e, tell it to me in a dream and I will give it to you."[10]

The king understood that the plague spread over the country had been caused by the god's anger at his father's neglect of offerings to the Euphrates River and the violation of the treaty with Egypt which he had formerly concluded. Muršili asked the Storm god what he, as the son of his father, needed to do to compensate and asked the god to tell him through a dream. The verb *išḫiyatteni* in line 35' occurs in the second person plural form of *išḫai-/išḫiya-*. Because compensation – *šarnikzel-*[11]— is the obligation the gods imposed upon the king, it can be described as a part of the law of the gods, or a part of the *išḫiul-*. The Hittite king thought that a dream was one of the methods through which the gods transferred their demands.

The gods also appeared in dreams voluntarily. They made an appearance when they wanted to communicate their demands to the people. In the "Apology of Ḫattušili" (CTH 81), the king twice mentions that his personal goddess Ištar appeared in his dream.[12]

KUB 1.1+ i 35-42 (CTH81.A=Apology of Ḫattušili)

"My brother, Muw[at]alli summoned me "to the deity (of the process)". But Ištar, My Lady, appeared to me in a dream, and through the dream she said this to me: "To the deity (of the process)" I will leave you, so do not fear!" and through the deity I was acquitted. Since the goddess, My Lady, held me by the hand, she never exposed me to an evil deity (nor) to an evil lawsuit, never did she let an enemy weapon sway over me: Ištar, My Lady, took me to her in every respect."[13]

When Ḫattušili, the later Hittite king, was appointed as the governor of the Upper Land by his brother and the current king Muwatalli, his political enemies tried to remove him from office with the help of black magic. The king Muwatalli investigated this matter through "to the deity (of the process)", which is divine trial, and which finally turned out favorable to Ḫattušili. The example cited explains that his personal goddess Ištar informed Ḫattušili that she would side with him and promised a favorable result of the trial.

The goddess also appeared in his dream when he married Puduḫepa, a daughter of the priest named Pentipšarri in Kizzuwatna, to tell him to make his whole family become her servants.

KUB 1.1+ iii 1-8 (CTH81.A=Apology of Ḫattušili)

> "[A]t the behest of the goddess I took Puduḫepa, the daughter of Pentipsarri, the priest, for my wife: we joined (in matrimony) [and] the goddess gave [u]s the love of husband (and) w[i]fe. We made ourselves sons (and) daughters. Then the goddess, My Lady, appeared to me in a dream (saying): "Become my servant [with] (your) household!" so the goddess' [serv]ant with my household I became. In the house which we made ourselves, the goddess was there with us and our house thrived: that was the recognition of Ištar, My Lady."[14)]

As seen in these examples, whether the king "receives" the divine words from his dream depends on the gods' will. All the gods' words can be described as *išḫiul-* imposed upon the king, which he had to observe. Observing the law of the gods would ensure prosperity for the king and his kingdom. Even though these always concerned the king's personal matters in the first place, his wellbeing was thought to influence the whole land because he embodied it. If needed, he might instruct his people on how they were supposed to worship the gods. For example, Ḫattušili, as the servant of Ištar, must have been responsible for instructing the priests how his personal goddess should be treated. As Taggar-Cohen (2014:11) already pointed out, the king issued instruction texts as the king's law for maintaining the god's worship, and in order to avoid sinning against the gods' will, the priests thus instructed worked directly under divine rule and judgment.

3. Communication through Oracular Inquiry

Another means of communication between the gods and humanity was oracle inquiry. Frantz-Szabó (2015) summarizes that "oracular inquiries were carried out to determine the course of a military campaign, the routes of march, and the winter quarters of the army; the possible outbreak of plague in the military camp; evil phenomena to be expected upon an accession to the throne; and very often concerning illnesses of the king and the royal couple." Therefore, oracles were consulted to obtain answers from the gods concerning matters that could affect the whole land. This suggests that it was the king who initiated these oracular inquiries.

The Hittites used various types of oracles such as the lot-oracle, extispicy and augury.[15)] A diviner interpreted the results of inquires as simple answers, either a favorable "yes" or unfavorable "no". A text preserving results of a liver-oracle shows the process in which the diviner ascertained the cause

of the divine anger and then determined the appropriate way of celebrating the god.

KUB 5.6+KUB 18.54 i 20'-26' (CTH570=liver oracle (SU))

(20') *A-NA* DINGIR^{LIM} *ku-it iš-ḫi-ú-ul ŠA* LÚ ^{URU}*Aš-ta-ta i-wa-ar* SIxSÁ-*at* (21') *nu* LÚ ^{URU}*Aš-ta-ta ku-iš* 1 EZEN *ḫar-pí-ya-aš* 1 EZEN *ŠA* ITI.10. ⌜KAM⌝ *IQ-BI* (22') *na-at IŠ-TU TUP-PÍ ma-aḫ-ḫa-an a-ni-ya-an-te-eš na-aš QA-TAM-MA* (23') *e-eš*-šu-*wa-an ti-i-ya-an-zi ŠA* ^{f}*Mi-iz-zu-ul-la-ya i-wa-ar ku-it* (24') *iš-ḫi-ú-ul ke-e-da-aš A-NA* SISKUR$^{ḪI.A}$ *an-da* SixSÁ-*at nu-kán ma-a-an* DINGIR^{LUM} (25') EZEN *a-ya-a-ri ke-e-da-aš A-NA* EZEN$^{ḪI.A}$ *ŠA* ^{f}*Mi-iz-zu-ul-la* (26') *i-wa-ar an-da ša-an-aḫ-ta nu* SixSÁ-*at*

"Because *išḫiul* in the style of the man of Aštata was established by oracle, and the man of Aštata mentioned one harvest festival (lit. 'of the grain pile') and one festival in the tenth month, they will begin to celebrate them as they are set down on the tablet. Because *išḫiul* in the style of Mezzulla was (also) established for these festivals, whether you, O deity, among these festivals desired an *ayari*-festival in the style of Mezzulla was established by oracle."[16]

Performing these liver-oracles, the diviner tried to determine which god had caused the illness of the king and which festival he demanded.[17] According to the result of an oracle inquiry, the diviner ascertained that the *išḫiul*- in the style of "man of Aštata" was appropriate for the harvest festival and the festival in the tenth month. In addition, another oracle established the *išḫiul* in the style of a female diviner named Mezzulla meaning that a certain *ayari*-festival in her style was also demanded for these festivals.[18] The *išḫiul*- occurring in this text seems to be traditionally performed local procedures for festivals, which had been already ascertained and established by oracle inquiries before. The gods, through oracles, informed people which festivals they should celebrate and how they should perform them. Thus, oracles let people know the divine *išḫiul*- through a yes or no answer. They were to be initiated by the Hittite king whose duty was to celebrate the gods appropriately as their principal priest.

For humans, oracles were the only means of asking the gods, on their own initiative, what they exactly needed to know. Because the issues of the inquiries mostly affected the whole land, it must have been the king who ordered diviners to ascertain the divine will. However, after the result became known, the king had the right to establish and stipulate concrete procedures of worship of the gods by the people through an official document. This is well illustrated by a festival text, KBo 2.4 rev. iv 27'-28' (CTH672.D=Monthly festival of Nerik)

(27') INIM *Ta-ba-ar-na* LUGAL.GAL *ki-i-kán* (28') *iš-ḫi-ú-ul le-e ku-iš-ki wa-aḫ-nu-zi*

"The word of the Tabarna, the great king, this *išḫiul* no one shall change!"[19]

The king determined the procedures of the festival addressing the priests in the temple at the holy city of Nerik. Now, the meaning of *išḫiul-* evolved to literally "the king's words" – INIM *Tabarna*[20] – from its original meaning of the law of the gods. If the words were written down on a tablet, the text was called an instruction document by the king, who had to make sure that his words would not be changed in order not to go against the divine will.

4. Conclusion

Looking at the usages of the noun *išḫiul-* in prayers and ritual texts, we can assume that the Hittite king could receive the law of the gods either through dreams or oracles. Receiving a message directly from the gods or having diviners interpret omens, he could know what the gods wanted him to do. He obeyed the law and imposed the obligations according to the law upon his subjects.

The discussions above can be summarized into the following four points. Firstly, through a dream, the gods informed the king of his personal matters such as compensation due and his servitude to them. The gods were not only asked to appear in his dream, but they also appeared voluntarily when they wanted to tell him something. Secondly, oracular inquiries were initiated by the king and performed and interpreted by a diviner in order to know what the gods demanded regarding national affairs. Thirdly, we can describe dreams as being the means of communication from the gods while oracles were the means of communication requested by the king. Finally, after communication was established by either way, the king, as the highest priest, issued instruction texts titled *išḫiul-* to the people when he thought them needed. An *išḫiul-* text might also have been intended to show and inform the gods that the king behaved correctly according to their will.

This paper aimed at showing the general picture of communication between the gods and the Hittite king. It is necessary, however, to take a closer look at the contents of the divine messages both through dreams and oracles. In order to comprehend the concrete process of the communication, we need to understand what the gods told the king to do and how the king tried to know the gods' will.

In any case, the communications between the gods and the Hittite king discussed in this paper might also give rise to suggestions for further biblical study. Tagger-Cohen (2014: 13) suggested "while the gods in the Hittite case and YHWH in the biblical case are the *de facto* rulers, there is in both cases a mediator: the Hittite king and the leader Moses, or in other biblical cases Joshua, Gideon, Judges and the kings." Even if there may not be direct correlation, the ways of communication between the gods and the Hittite king and between God and the leaders in the biblical world could be conceptually connected.

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Notes

1) Puhvel's translation (1984: 400): "binding; obligation, injunction; statute; treaty." Kloekhorst follows his translation (2008: 392).
2) Puhvel (1984: 398) translates this verb as "bind, wrap; obligate with; impose upon," and Kloekhorst (2008: 391) follows his translation.
3) As for the usages of the verb *išḫai-/išḫiya-* and its meaning, see Yamamoto (2015).
4) See Taggar-Cohen (2011: 482).

5) Most of the Hittite texts from Hattuša, the capital of the kingdom, have been published in the series KBo=*Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköy*, Berlin or KUB=*Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköy*, Berlin.
6) CTH=Laroche, E. *Catalogue des textes hittites,* 1971, Paris. This project of categorization has been continued to be updated by S. Košak and G.G.W. Müller.
7) According to the transliteration of Sürenhagen (1981: 108-122) and the translation of Singer (2002: 103).
8) According to the transliteration and translation of Schwemer (2011: 16-17; 24).
9) See CHD (*The Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, Chicago, 1980ff.) (Š: 44).
10) According to the transliteration of Lebrun (1980: 209) and translation of van den Hout (2006: 265).
11) See CHD (Š: 279-281).
12) In this text, Ḫattušili narrated that Ištar also showed up once in a dream of his wife and queen Puduḫepa and once in those of the generals. See Mouton (2007: 88-91). The gods were thought to appear not only in the king's dream but also in dreams of people to whom they wanted to tell something.
13) According to the translation of van den Hout (2003: 202).
14) According to the translation of van den Hout (2003: 202).
15) For a general description of each type of oracle, see Frantz-Szabó (2015).
16) According to the transliteration of Beckman et al. (2011: 184-185). While they translate *išḫiul* here as "regimen," it is misleading because it only suggests a set of rules for improving the king's health. The translation of the word remains *išḫul* in order to regard it as god's will for the whole process of the festivals. The sign in the end of line 20' should be SIxSÁ-*at* instead of SIG_5-*at* that appears in the transliteration of Beckman et al. This transliteration must be a simple typo because they translated here correctly as "established (SIxSÁ-*at*)," not "favorible (SIG_5-*at*)".
17) Beckman et. al (2011: 185) suggested that the angry god mentioned in this text was Išḫara, the goddess of oath.
18) Puhvel (1991: 304) mentions, "*ḫiyara*- is a hittitized form of the month name *hiyari* in Hurrian territory (Alalah, Nuzi, Ugarit), which in turn matches Akkadian *ayari* (second month, April – May)." Hutter (2002) argues that the *ḫiyara*-festival was originated from North Syria, which was the festival for the Storm god in Aleppo. It was not only for worshipers of the god in Ḫattuša but also people from Aleppo living there. As one of the state festivals, it was celebrated as a royal prerogative (Taggar-Cohen 2006: 120).
19) According to the transliteration and the translation of Tagger-Cohen (2006: 227).
20) *Tabarna* or *Labarna* was the title of Hittite kings.

The Interpretations of the Golden Calf Story in Exodus 32: A New Suggestion Based on Comparison with Syriac Christianity

Koji Osawa

1. The Golden Calf Story in Exodus 32

In this paper, I describe various interpretations of the Golden Calf story in Exodus 32 and explore previous research on this story and the possibility of further research on the subject. There seems to be no doubt that this story is one of the most important and influential incidents in the Hebrew Bible for both Judaism and Christianity. To recount the exact content of the story, I cite the English Standard Version of verses 1 to 6 below. The incident happens when Moses is receiving the Torah at the top of Mt. Sinai:

1. When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." 2. So Aaron said to them, "Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." 3. So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. 4. And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" 5. When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord." 6. And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.

At this point, God tells Moses what happened at the foot of the mountain, which causes him to descend from the mountain. Moses rages against the people and breaks the table, and finally summons the Levites to kill 3000 people. On the one hand, this incident provides Christians with the ideal excuse to attack the Jewish people and Judaism, claiming that they had foolishly and greedily turned to idolatry, that their covenant with God was canceled because of this incident, and so on. On the other hand, Jewish biblical interpreters have also made a number of exegeses about this story with a variety of purposes. In the next chapter, we will look at some of the many different interpretations of the Golden Calf story, in both Judaism and Christianity.

2. Various Interpretations

In this chapter, we investigate some of the interpretations of the Golden Calf story up to the completion of the Babylonian Talmud, around the sixth century. This partition is due to the fact that many different interpretations had been documented by this point; newer literature after the completion of the Babylonian Talmud copied older interpretations in many cases. In what follows, we will list several different interpretations in turn.

2.1 Judaism

Firstly, one interpretation involves retelling the story of Exodus without the Golden Calf episode; Josephus in the Roman Empire used this technique.[1] However, many others have mostly retold the Golden Calf story while adding explanations or comments alongside the biblical text. Commonly used motifs are the idea that the people who gathered around Aaron were very fearful for some reasons, and therefore their blame should be mitigated[2]; that Aaron, who the biblical narrative says made the Golden Calf, unsuccessfully tried to calm the people down and persuade them that they did not to ask for the calf[3]; that Aaron was endeavoring to buy time until Moses came down from the mountain[4]; that the women refused to hand in their gold rings to the men, so the men used their own rings to make the calf[5]; that it was the people, rather than Aaron, who made the calf,[6] and so on. I cite one of the Jewish interpretations here in detail, with the aim of comparing it with a Christian interpretation in the next chapter.

Leviticus Rabbah 10:3, which is thought to have been compiled in Palestine during the fifth century,[7] states that "when the Israelites were about to commit that act," i.e. making the golden calf, "they went first to Hur." He was appointed by Moses as a mediator among the people. "They [the people] said to him: 'Up, make us a god.' As he did not hearken to them, they rose against him and slew him. . . . Afterwards they went to Aaron, and said to him: *Up, make us a god*. As soon as Aaron heard of it [i.e., Hur's death], he became frightened, as it is said, *Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it.* This is to be read, *he was frightened when he saw the slaughtered man before him*. Aaron said to himself: 'What shall I do? They have already killed Hur who was a prophet; if they kill also me whom am a priest, there will instantly be fulfilled against them the verse saying, *Should priest and prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord* (Lamentations 2:20), Israel will immediately be liable to exile.'"[8]

The gist of this part of the text, which differs from the biblical account in Exodus 32, is that the people go first to Hur and then to Aaron and demand that each make a god; Hur refuses and is killed;

Aaron sees this violent act and is fearful. The modified reading of the biblical text (32:5) is suggested as proof of this interpretation; thus וַיַּרְא אַהֲרֹן וַיִּבֶן מִזְבֵּחַ לְפָנָיו (*vayyar aharon vayyiven mizbeach lefanav*) is read as "*vayyira aharon vayyaven mizavuach lefanav*"; this modification has Aaron bowing to the people's demand to make the Golden Calf because he is afraid that they will commit further crimes if they kill him, a priest of the Lord. The parallel tradition is recorded also in the Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 7a.

It can be said that these interpretations seem to mitigate the responsibility either of the people or of Aaron, although there is no evidence to identify the real intention. In contrast, a number of interpretations affirm that the making of the Golden Calf was a real sin and that the people and Aaron were guilty and were punished, but were later forgiven.[9] In the course of the history of these interpretations, we can note some trends in specific periods, which will be discussed in the following chapter on previous studies.

2.2 Christianity

Many Christian interpretations are aggressively against Judaism. As early as New Testament times, there were Christian interpretations that seemed to be opposed to Judaism or Jewish people. These interpretations state that the Jewish people, or the Israelites, were abandoned by God because of the Golden Calf,[10] that they broke their covenant with God as a result of the Golden Calf,[11] and that the incident was a manifestation of their foolishness or greed.[12] Although less frequently, some church fathers have interpreted the Golden Calf story in a way that was not so aggressively against Judaism. These interpreters state that Aaron tried to persuade the people not to ask for the Calf to be made, and that Aaron was so afraid of being killed that he decided to make the Calf so that the people would not commit the sin of killing their priest,[13] and so on. Judging from these apparently contradictory attitudes of the church fathers toward the Golden Calf story, we cannot assume that there is a consistent Christian interpretation.

Before analyzing the background of these various interpretations, both in Judaism and in Christianity, we will review what has already been discussed, considered, or revealed about this significant incident in the Hebrew Bible and its interpretations, by looking at several pieces of previous research of the interpretations of the Golden Calf story.

3. Previous Research

In this chapter, I will look at five characteristic studies relating to the Golden Calf story: this does

not mean that these studies are the most important studies in this field, or that other related studies are worthless.

3.1 Leivy Smolar and Moshe Aberbach, 1968

Nearly half a century ago, Leivy Smolar and Moshe Aberbach published a comprehensive analysis of the different interpretations of the Golden Calf story. Their paper, "The Golden Calf Episode in Post-biblical Literature,"[14] is seen as "the first study, which properly focuses on the early history of the reception of the golden calf episode."[15] Smolar and Aberbach collected a variety of interpretations from pre-rabbinic literature such as Josephus and Philo, early Christian literature, rabbinic literature, and the works of the church fathers, and described the intentions behind the rabbinic interpretations. They classed their materials into several categories including "rabbinic defense methods," "Christian views," "moderate rabbinic apologetics," "militant defense of Israel," and so on. Although their comprehensiveness is valuable and they were influential in helping later scholarship to grasp the general representation of the Golden Calf story, their study has various problems. Firstly, they collected a variety of interpretations and traditions under the single category of "rabbinic," and did not take into account the differences, between even the Tannaitic and Amoraic periods. As they stated: "From the end of the first century onward, both the Tannaim and the Amoraim were deeply concerned with polemical attacks of Christianity" (p. 95), thus they only considered the external reasons for the Golden Calf story and did not pay attention to the inner changes or developments within "rabbinic" interpretations. Secondly, according to them, Jewish apologetic interpretations of the Golden Calf story always seemed to respond to the Christian polemic, as if the Jews of that time had no contact with or did not come under attack from anyone but Christians.[16] In any case, this study is a good way to acknowledge the various interpretations of the Golden Calf story, though its treatment of them is problematic.

3.2 Irving J. Mandelbaum, 1990

In his article, "Tannaitic Exegesis of the Golden Calf Episode,"[17] Irving J. Mandelbaum examines the Tannaitic interpretations that deal directly with the Golden Calf story, with detailed textual analysis. He says, "virtually all of these exegetical traditions treat the incident of the calf as a classic story of sin and atonement. All assume that Aaron and Israel commit serious sins, are punished for their transgressions, and are ultimately forgiven by God" (p. 207). In order to demonstrate this idea, he cites texts from Tannaitic works such as Tosefta, Mekhilta, Sifra, and Sifre, and classifies them into three categories: "the seriousness of the sin," "the punishment for the sin" and "atonement and

forgiveness." Although his classification is convincing and I have no objections to his conclusion, I have nevertheless several comments to make on his work. Firstly, regarding Tosefta Kippurim 5(4), 17, he says, "this is the only tradition among exegeses attributed to Tannaim that denies Israel's responsibility for the sin of the calf" (p. 222) and does not explore it further. This is left to us to research further. Secondly, he does not pay attention to anything outside of Judaism. Although I am not sure of the strength or influence of the mutual relations between the Jewish community and the exterior world, such as the Roman Empire and incipient Christianity, influence from outside of Judaism should be taken into account, even if it does not alter our conclusions.

In any case, there is no doubt that Mandelbaum presents a probable general representation of the Tannaitic interpretation of the Golden Calf story.

3.3 Pier Cesare Bori, 1990

In his book, *The Golden Calf and the Origins of the anti-Jewish Controversy*,[18] Bori analyzed how the Church has used the Golden Calf story as an attack against Judaism. This book is mainly based on the materials and analysis of Smolar and Aberbach, mentioned above, and considers them in more detail. Therefore, in a sense, it can be said to be a development of Smolar and Aberbach's study. Although it has some problems, such as an over-simplification of the Christian attitude toward Judaism and the Jewish people, which we are not likely to find from reading the texts of the church fathers, it can be a help in considering how Christians respond to Judaism and read the Golden Calf story.

3.4 Chung, 2010

As the title suggests, Youn Ho Chung's book, *the Sin of the Calf: the Rise of the Bible's Negative Attitude toward the Golden Calf*,[19] considers the Golden Calf or Calves traditions throughout the whole Bible. As well as the description in Exodus 32, there is also an important tradition of the Golden Calves made by Jeroboam in 1 Kings 12. Using the medium of biblical studies, Chung analyzes several biblical texts that mention calf worship, with some mention of non-Jewish concepts of calves, such as Mesopotamian and Egyptian ideas. In conclusion, he states, "the image of the calf was not considered negative or contradictory to the aniconic Israelite religious tradition. (…) it was in fact regarded within the Israelite religion as a footstool of their invisible God, YHWH" (p. 204). Although I do not go deeply into the validity of Chung's contention and the inner-biblical problems here in this paper, it is obvious that the Golden Calf story has some critical issues from its origin and has been controversial even within the Bible itself.

3.5 Lindqvist, 2008

The last study that I will mention here is Pekka Lindqvist's *Sin at Sinai: Early Judaism Encounters Exodus 32*. This is the latest monograph about the interpretations of the Golden Calf story in Exodus, and refers to all the studies mentioned above (except Chung's). Lindqvist explores in detail each of the previous studies and different interpretations up to the sixth century, using textual and literary analyses; he states, in conclusion, that "since expressions of the apologetical attitude throughout the entire period were encountered in various types of texts, contexts and historical circumstances, one hardly can speak of a cause or a reason behind this attitude" (p. 322). More specifically, he states "there are indications that the inner-Judaic catechetical needs were the primary reason for the vindication of Aaron" (p. 323). This means that, according to him, "the Inner-Judaic catechetical needs" were a stronger reason to defend Aaron than Christian polemics. He also states that the need to defend the people in Jewish interpretations was caused by external reasons, including Christian polemics. In this manner, Lindqvist's contribution was to focus on the details and subtle differences in each text, the context, and the set of historical circumstances. With this perspective, possible avenues for further research are described in the next chapter.

4. The possibility of further research

All of the above-mentioned previous studies being considered, we need to focus on a limited period and place in order to present a more detailed analysis of the Golden Calf story and its interpretations. As one such case study, I propose the comparison of Tannaitic and Amoraic interpretations with those of Syriac Christianity.

4.1 Comparison with Syriac Christianity

Syriac Christianity was developed during the first centuries CE, mainly in Antioch and Edessa. There are many similarities between Syriac Christianity and Judaism at that time: geographically and linguistically, Syria is very close to Palestinian Judaism, and we can find some literary materials in Syriac works that are relevant to the Jewish traditions. This is one of the reasons for comparing Syriac Christianity with Judaism here. In this paper, I will explore some Syriac Christian works, especially those of Ephrem the Syrian, and compare them with the Jewish interpretations of the Golden Calf story.

4.1.2 Ephrem the Syrian and his interpretation

Ephrem the Syrian, who was born in Nisibis in the fourth century, is considered a major representative of the Syrian church fathers. He is known for his severe attacks on Judaism, although his attitude is now being reconsidered by Elena Narinskaya,[20] amongst others. Therefore, it is appropriate to investigate Ephrem's interpretation of the Golden Calf story. In the following, we see his interpretation in detail and compare it with a parallel Jewish interpretation. This is part of his commentary on Chapter 32 of the Book of Exodus, based on Salvesen's translation:[21]

Aaron argued with them, and he saw that they wanted to stone him as they had stoned Hur. For when Moses went up the mountain, he told the elders to bring their judgments to Hur, but after Moses' descent, Hur is nowhere mentioned. Because of this people say that the Israelites killed him when they rioted against Aaron over the image of the Calf, since Hur forbade them to change gods. So Aaron was afraid that he too would die, that they would incur blood-guilt for this murder, and that they would make themselves not one calf but several; and even though they would not enter Egypt, they might turn back. So he shrewdly sent them a message, asking them to bring their wives' earrings, in the hope that the women might prevent their husband from casting the Calf, either in order to hold onto their earrings, or out of love for their God.

In this interpretation, we find such motifs as "Hur killed by the people," "Aaron's fear," "Aaron's effort to avoid the killing of priest by the people," and "Aaron's expectation for the wives." It can be said that the deeds of the people are clearly criticized, while Aaron is defended for the same reason as found in the Jewish tradition discussed above. Given this fact, it is probable that the source of Ephrem's interpretation is Jewish tradition, and this could be a reason for the similarities between Judaism and Syriac Christianity, as described above. In any case, if there are some church fathers who defended Aaron in this incident,[22] why did even Ephrem, who used many harsh descriptions of Judaism, criticize the people and defend Aaron at the same time?

4.1.3 The background of Ephrem's interpretation

In response to the question above, it is likely that he found a Christian signification rather than a Jewish one in the figure of Aaron. As some previous scholarship has indicated regarding the general tendency of the traditions defending Aaron, he had the status of a priest; thus, both Aaron and Jesus were appointed by God. I cite Chapter 5 of the Letter to the Hebrews (English Standard Version) as proof:

> [1] For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. . . . [4] And no one takes this honor for himself,

> but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. [5] So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; [6] as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." . . . [9] And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, [10] being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Both Aaron and Jesus were chosen as priests (I realize that Jesus is described as the priest of Melchizedek, but I am not investigating here the difference between the priesthood of Aaron and Melchizedek.) Thus, it can be said that some of the church fathers, or Ephrem at least, saw Jesus as the priest behind Aaron the priest. Although it is possible that Ephrem only cited Jewish tradition without this background in mind, the audience for or the readers of his commentary would have understood the setting.

In this example, the key to investigating the similarity of interpretations between Leviticus Rabbah and Ephrem's commentary of Exodus is the character of Aaron. On the one hand, in order to decrease the sense of guilt in the Golden Calf story, which may be motivated by the desire to defend Judaism against external attacks such as those by Christianity, the composer(s) of the tradition in Leviticus Rabbah attempted to mitigate the blame of Aaron as a representative of Judaism. On the other hand, the church fathers—or at least Ephrem the Syrian—defended Aaron in the Golden Calf story because he was the archetype of the priest, which Jesus would also be. It can be said that, in this context, Judaism and Christianity do the same thing by defending Aaron in order to defend themselves, because Aaron is both the representative of Judaism and the archetype of Jesus.

5. Conclusion

So far, we have explored the Golden Calf story itself, the Jewish and Christian interpretations of this story, and previous studies concerning it; we have compared and analyzed two similar interpretations in Leviticus Rabbah and Ephrem's commentary on Exodus as an example of further research. By comparing interpretations from rabbinic literature and Syriac Christianity in this paper, we can see that defending Aaron is not only a feature of Jewish apologetics, but could also result from respect for Jesus. Although it is difficult to issue a comprehensive statement about the Golden Calf story now, by adopting other perspectives we can demonstrate, albeit in a small way, that there are other important facts hidden behind the story. In any case, there is no doubt that the Golden Calf story is, for Bible readers, a source of interpretation that never runs dry.

Notes

1) *Jewish Antiquities* III, ch. 5.
2) E.g., Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 89a.
3) E.g., Leviticus Rabbah 10:3.
4) E.g., ibid.
5) E.g., Song of Songs Rabbah 4:9.
6) E.g., Pseudo-Philo, ch. 12.
7) Strack, H. L. and Stemberger, G., *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 291.
8) This English translation is based on, Israelstam, R. J. and Slotki, J. J. (tr.), *Midrash Rabbah: Leviticus* (London and New York: The Soncino Press, 1983), with slight modifications derived from the critical edition of Margulies, M., *Midrash Wayyikra Rabbah*, 2 vols. (New York and Jerusalem: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1993); some of its passages are omitted.
9) E.g., Sifra, Shemini 1:3.
10) E.g., Acts 7:38–42.
11) E.g., The letter of Barnabas 4:6–9.
12) E.g., Tertullian, *Against Marcion* II, 18.
13) Those interpretations, which can be seen in *Exodus Commentary* of Ephrem the Syrian, will be discussed below.
14) In *Hebrew Union College Annual* vol. 39 (1968), 91–116.
15) Lindqvist, P., *Sin at Sinai: Early Judaism Encounters Exodus 32* (Vaajakoski: Gummerus Printing, 2008), 40.
16) These problems with this article have already been noted by Lindqvist. See Lindqvist, op. cit., 40–44.
17) In Davies, P. R. and White, R. T. (ed.), *A Tribute to Geza Vermes: Essays on Jewish and Christian Literature and History* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 207–223.
18) Ward, D. (tr.) (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1990).
19) New York: T & T Clark, 2010.
20) Narinskaya, E., *Ephrem, a 'Jewish' Sage: A Comparison of the Exegetical Writings of St. Ephrem the Syrian and Jewish Traditions* (Vienna: Brepols, 2010).
21) Salvesen, A. (tr.), *The Exodus Commentary of St Ephrem* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2011).
22) E.g., Tertullian, *Antidote for the Scorpion's Sting* 3.

Conditions for Attaining True Knowledge of God: According to the *Guide of the Perplexed* III:52-54

Aiko Kanda

1. Introduction

Moses Maimonides (Moshe ben Maimon, Hebrew acronym: Rambam, 1138-1204) is one of the greatest thinkers of the medieval period, who had numerous roles in his life, such as a Rabbi, Jewish community leader, medical doctor, and philosophical scholar. He wrote many books in various fields,[1] and his most important philosophical work is *the Guide of the Perplexed* (Arabic: *Dalālat al-ḥāʾirīn*, Hebrew: *Moreh nebukhim*, Latin: *Dux neutrorum*) written in Judeo-Arabic (hereafter referred to as the *Guide*). The *Guide* was written for his disciple, Joseph ben Judah (c. 1160-1226), after his disciple left for Aleppo in 1185. There are three parts in the *Guide*: the first part (total 76 chapters) deals with the explanation of Hebrew vocabulary, especially vocabulary relating to God's existence, His oneness, His incorporeality, and His eternity, which are the first four of Maimonides' thirteen principles (*qawāʿid*) of Judaism in his *Commentary on the Mishnah, Introduction to Sanhedrin,* Chapter 10 *(Helek);* in the second part (total 48 chapters), Maimonides demonstrates God's creation, such as the spheres and the angels, the creation stories in the *Torah*, and the prophets and the prophecies; in the third part (total 54 chapters), he discusses both philosophical matters, such as form and matter, or deprivation and evil, as well as metaphysical subjects, such as God's providence, the commandments of God, and the soul and body of human beings. He posits his concluding chapters in the last part of the *Guide*, from chapter 51 to chapter 54.

In the introduction to the *Guide*, Maimonides explains that the external meanings of the parables of the prophets are useful for the welfare of human societies, whereas the internal meanings of it are useful for individual beliefs. In the *Guide,* part three, chapter 54, Maimonides insists that man's ultimate aim is to acquire true knowledge of God; however, it is only attainable through satisfying several requirements to this end. In this presentation, I will examine these conditions, which Maimonides believes to be necessary for attaining true knowledge of God, by focusing on his concluding chapters, namely, the *Guide*, part three, chapters 52 to 54.[2]

2. Perfection from Four Aspects

In chapter 54, Maimonides analyses the perfection of man from four aspects. The first one is the perfection of possessions that an individual obtains for himself; for example, money, clothes, tools, slaves, lands, and other similar objects, on which people spend much time trying to reach this perfection.[3] Maimonides argues that there is no relationship between such an individual and this kind of perfection, because these possessions exist outside of that person, and each of these possessions exists on its own. For example, a great king could become a mean and despised man if he lost the link between his property and himself, even though he himself has not been changed at all. Since this perfection cannot be perpetuated, a man cannot achieve any assured reality through that perfection.

The second one is the perfection of the body's constitution and shape, that is, the perfection of an individual's temperament and body; it should be well balanced and proportioned.[4] This, Maimonides states, cannot be the final goal of man's perfection, because this bodily perfection is possessed by all species of animals in common. Furthermore, even if one's physical strength reaches its best, if one compares one's physical strength with a lion's, it cannot on any account exceed a lion's power. So it can be said that this perfection merely aims at the body's utility and still lacks certain benefit for the soul of man.

The third one is the perfection of the moral virtues (*faḍāʾil al-khulqīya*),[5] which an individual pursues in order to develop his own character (*akhlāq*). Most of God's *commandments* (*mizvot*) serve to help man attain this perfection.[6] Maimonides remarks that this perfection is needed only as a preliminary step, and is not a goal in itself, because all these virtues relate only to a relationship between an individual and other people. They only serve to benefit others, or to be used as tools for others, because if a man is alone and does not have any relations with other people, then, all his virtues are not employed for anything, and accomplish nothing within that individual. Therefore, it can be said that this perfection is useful only for others, and is not beneficial for man's own self.

The fourth aspect is the true perfection for man. It aspires to attaining rational virtues (*faḍāʾil al-nuṭqīya*)[7], in other words, it works to conceptualise the intelligible (*muʿqūlāt*) to obtain true opinions concerning divine matters. This is man's final goal, Maimonides argues, as it completes the true perfection within each individual serving for that individual man alone. It grants eternity to that person, and it makes a man as he ought to be. Maimonides insists that we should not take pride in the aforementioned three perfections: possession, bodily health, and character, as both prophets and philosophers have warned us. Rather, we are expected to desire and to be proud of knowledge of Him to be exalted (*maʿrifat-hu taʿalā*), because it is the true science (*ʿilm al-ḥaqīqī*).

3. Difference between 'Wisdom' and 'Intellect'

How then can man obtain true knowledge of God? Firstly, let us see how Maimonides elucidates the meaning of wisdom at the beginning of chapter 54. He explains that the term '*wisdom*' (*ḥokhmah*) in Hebrew has four meanings. One meaning is apprehension of the true realities (*idrāk al-ḥaqāʾiq*), which means, to apprehend the reality of God. It is also applied to the acquisition of moral virtues. Another meaning is the acquisition of art (*ṣināʿa*), in other words, to acquire skills and techniques for practical works. The last one is applied to the aptitude for stratagems and tactics. Based on the above explanation, '*the wise*' (*ḥakham*) can be defined as one who has the aptitude for rational virtues, moral virtues, practical skills, and stratagems and tactics. So, a man who has knowledge of the Law (*ʿilm at-sharīa*)[8] can be called 'the wise,' because he has an aptitude for both rational and moral virtues. Concerning the rational matter in the Law, a man accepts it as the truth without it being demonstrated as such through the method of speculation.[9] Besides, a man accepts wisdom from the books of the prophets and the sayings of the Sages, and this wisdom demonstrates the rational matter in the Law as true. Through this, we can understand that the knowledge of the Torah and wisdom of the Sages are different kinds. The Sages mention that man is required firstly to obtain knowledge of the Torah, then the wisdom [of the Sages], and lastly the legal science of the Law (*fiqh at-sharīa*) in order to judge what he ought to do through inference (*istikhrāj*). In other words, firstly, a man needs to accept the opinions (*ārāʾ*) of the Torah, and secondly, these opinions should be demonstrated, and lastly, required actions should be clarified.

In chapter 52 Maimonides expounds what the intellect is. He argues that those who have decided to achieve human perfection should know that the intellect (*al-ʿaql*) is always with us, connecting man with God.[10] Through this intellect, namely, the light from above, God watches over us, while we understand Him through this light. It is only after understanding this point, Maimonides explains, that a man comes to perceive humbleness, fear of God, and shame before Him. Because of this esoteric understanding, referring to the way of the *Sages* (*ḥakhamīm*), their secret (*bāṭin*) conduct at home comes to be the same as their public (*ẓāhir*) conduct outside of their home. Through the above considerations, it can be concluded that by way of the intellect from above, man can obtain true knowledge of God, with the help of both the knowledge of the Law and the wisdom of the Sages.[11]

4. Two things to Learn through the Law: Fear and Love for God

As we understand from the above, we are first required to have knowledge of the Law. In chapter

52, Maimonides explains two things which the Law teaches us. He points out that the purpose of all actions prescribed by the Law is to fear God and to tremble before the commandments of God. The Torah says: "*If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this Law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful Name, the Lord thy God*" (Deut. 28:58). From this verse, it can be understood that the intention of "*all the words of this Law*" is to fear God, and that this purpose can be achieved by observing "*all the words of this Law*", which means, to keep His *commandments and prohibitions* (*ʿaseh ve-lo taʿaseh*).[12)]

Maimonides maintains that the Torah also teaches us to understand His being and His unity; however, he insists that the opinion of the Torah, in the first place, demands of us *love* (*ahavah*). The next verse in the Torah emphasises this point: "*And thou shalt love the Lord* w*ith all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might*" (Deut. 6:5). Considering the above explanation, these two purposes in the Law, *love* (*ahavah*) and *fear* (*yruah*), are achieved: firstly, through loving God by understanding Him through the opinions taught by the Law including the apprehension of His being; and secondly, through fearing God by doing all the actions prescribed by the Law. Furthermore, we shall come to understand that these two things, to love and to fear God, are what the Law teaches us as a preparatory step to attain true knowledge of God, which is the final goal of human beings.

5. Three specific actions required of us: *Hesed* (loving-kindness), *Tsedaqah* (righteousness), *Mishpat* (judgement)

After having clarified the fundamental purpose of the Law, let us see how the wisdom of the Sages informs us about specific actions which are required of man under the Law. In chapter 53, Maimonides expounds three terms: *ḥesed* (loving-kindness), *tsedaqah* (righteousness), and *mishpat* (judgement). Based on his *Commentary on the Mishnah, Aboth,*[13)] he explains the meanings of these three terms. Firstly, the meaning of *ḥesed* (loving-kindness) is applied to the excess of beneficence (*mubālagā fī al-afḍāl*). This beneficence implies two notions: one is that to exercise beneficence to a man who has no right at all to claim this benefit; the other is that to exercise more beneficence than which a man deserves to claim. Most of the usage of the word *ḥesed* in the books of the prophets is applied to the first notion. In this sense, it can be said that every benefit coming from God is called *ḥesed* as man does not deserve to claim any beneficence from God.

Secondly, the word *tsedaqah* (righteousness) is derived from the word *tsedeq*, which means justice. The meaning of justice is to grant a right to something to all those who have such a right, or to give merit to a man who has such a right according to what he deserves. In the books of the prophets, fulfilling of duties with regard to others imposed upon a man for the sake of moral virtue (*faḍīl al-*

khulq), such as, remedying the injuries or returning of a pledge, is called *tsedaqah.*[14] If a man walks in the way of the moral virtue, he comes to act justly upon his rational soul, as he grants him his own due right which is his soul's proper and valid right. Thus, it can be understood that every moral virtue which is to be observed is called *tsedaqah.*

Thirdly, concerning the word *mishpat* (judgement): this implies the due imposed upon one who is judged, whether it be reward or punishment.[15] To summarize, Maimonides concludes that firstly, *ḥesed* (loving-kindness) is identical to beneficence. And secondly, *tsedaqah* (righteousness) is applied to every good deed for the sake of moral virtue, through which, one's soul becomes perfect. And thirdly, with *mishpat* (judgement), one might receive punishment at one time, and blessings at another.

In chapter 54, Maimonides examines how the Sages understood the above conceptions in their writings. In *Bereshith Rabbah*, it is said:[16] "One verse says, [*For wisdom is better than rubies,*] a*nd all things desirable are not to be compared unto her* (Prov. 8:11); whereas another verse says, *And all thy desirable things are not to be compared unto her* (Prov. 3:15). *'Things desirable'* connotes commandments (*mizvot*) and good deeds (*maʿsim tovim*); '*Thy desirable things,*' precious stones and pearls. My desirable things and thy desirable things are not to be compared unto her, for, '*But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth, and knoweth Me"* (Jer. 9:23). Here, Maimonides expounds what the Sages said about wisdom, that it is comparable with neither good deeds, including religious duties and actions for others for the sake of moral virtues (*khulkīyāt al-nāfiʿat*), nor precious treasures which man wishes to possess, because they are not equivalent to the ultimate goal, i.e., to attain knowledge of God, as they exist only as preparations for this final purpose.

6. The Way to Reach True Knowledge of God

From the above mentioned explanation, we can understand that to attain true knowledge of God is the ultimate goal for a man who has chosen to achieve human perfection. It also becomes clear that in order to reach that goal, one is supposed to accept both the opinion of the Torah and the wisdom of the Sages, and to fulfil all actions prescribed by the Law through loving Him and fearing Him. However, Maimonides emphasises that these are just preparatory steps to achieve the final goal, since they are not comparable to attaining knowledge of God. In chapter 52, Maimonides explains the reason why observing actions prescribed by the Law is important. He states that the purpose of all actions under the Law is to fear God, to know Him, and to exercise training for the purpose of achieving human perfection by exercising what the Law repeatedly commands us. In chapter 54,

Maimonides quotes a verse saying: "*That I am the Lord who exercise loving-kindness, judgement, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord*" (Jer. 9:24). Which means, what the Lord wishes to see in man is *loving-kindness, judgement, and righteousness*, all of which are attributes of God which Maimonides discusses in the *Guide*, part 1, from chapter 50 onward.

In addition, Maimonides discusses His essence and His attribute in the *Guide*, part 1, chapter 54. He insists that His essence cannot be grasped as it really is, meaning that it is impossible for man to know true reality of God. Nonetheless, His actions are apprehensible as a verse says: '*I will make all My goodness pass before thee*" (Exod. 33:19). "*All My goodness*" alludes to all existing things in another verse, which says: "*And God saw every thing that He had made, and behold, it was very good*" (Gen. 1:31). His actions are not His essence but His attributes, as most of His attributes are descriptions of His actions which are done through His essence, therefore, His attributes are apprehensible.[17)]

Now, let us return to the concluding chapters of part 3. In chapter 54, Maimonides quotes a verse from Jeremiah: '*Thus saith the Lord: Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me*" (Jer. 9:23-24). As the Sages understood from this verse, to acquire things for which people compete to win is not perfection, rather, to understand Him and His attributes, that is, to acquire the knowledge of His actions, is to be boasted of. In conclusion, Maimonides states: 'The perfection of man, that may truly be gloried in, remains in the one who has achieved the apprehension of God according to his faculty,[18)] and knows His providence over the creatures manifested in the act of being created and governed. After one has understood this, his way of life will always be seeking *loving-kindness, judgement, and righteousness* through assimilation to His actions.'[19)]

7. Conclusion

Through the above explanation, it can be seen that there are several steps to be taken by man in order to attain the true reality of God. Firstly, one should not take pride in perfections of bodily matters, i.e., possession, health, character, and wisdom, but should desire only knowledge of God. Secondly, one is first required to accept the opinions of the Torah, then to demonstrate these opinions through the wisdom of the Sages, and then to clarify his desired actions. Thirdly, one is required to love God by understanding Him through the opinions taught by the Law, and to fear God by doing all the actions prescribed by the Law. Fourthly, it is necessary to know that there is nothing to compare

with knowledge of God, whether it be precious treasures which man wishes to possess, or good deeds like religious duties, actions for others, or any kinds of wisdom. Lastly, one should understand that what the Lord wishes to see in man is *loving-kindness, judgement, and righteousness*, and that he keep this way of life through the assimilation of His actions.

As Maimonides explains in the *Guide*, part I, chapters 50 to 54, His essence is not apprehensible. In chapter 53, he quotes a saying from the Talmud: "*The Torah speaketh in the language of the sons of man*."[20] He states that the intention of this saying is to predicate perfection of Him, as these predicates or attributes are pertaining to His diverse actions. Though we cannot understand His essence, we can apprehend His actions through His creation. The only way to attain true knowledge of God is to understand the above matters, and to live one's own life by seeking *loving-kindness, judgement, and righteousness* through the assimilation of His actions.

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Notes

1) For example, *Logics* (*Maqāla fī ṣināʿat al-manṭiq*) and *Treatise on the Calender* (*Maʾamar ha-ʿibbur*) (1157/1158), which are said to have been written while he was still in Andalus; his great legal masterpieces, *Commentary on the Mishnah* (*Kitāb al-sirāj*) (1161-1168) and *Mishneh Torah* (1168-77); letters and responsa, such as a *Letter to Yemen* (*Iggeret Teman*) (1172); and medical writings which were written while he had been working as a court physician of Ayyubid dynasty .
2) My translation is based on: Moshe ben Maimon. ed. S. Munk. (1930). *Dalālat al-ḥāʾirīn*. Yerushalaim: Defus Azriel, pp. 465-471 (the critical edition of original Judeo-Arabic); and referred to: Mūsā ibn Maymūn. ed. and translit. H. Ātāy. *Dalālat al-ḥāʾirīn*. al-Qāḥira: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīnīya, pp. 728-741 (Arabic transliteration); Moses Maimonides. trans. S. Pines. (1963). *The Guide of the Perplexed.* Chicago and London: the University of Chicago Press, pp. 629-638 (English translation).
3) In the *Guide* II: 32, Maimonides discusses the conditions of being a prophet by quoting a dictum from B.T., Shabbat 92a and Nedarim 38a: '*Prophecy only rests upon a wise, strong, and rich man*'. He quotes the same dictum in *Commentary on the Mishnah, Introduction to Aboth (Shemonah Perakim)* chapter 7, explaining that being rich designates the moral perfection of contentment. See, Moses Maimonides. trans. Joseph I. Gorfinkle. (1912). *Eight Chapters on Ethics.* New York: Colombia University Press, p.80.
4) In *Shemonah Perakim* chapter 5, Maimonides insists that man should preserve his bodily health in order to acquire wisdom and knowledge of God, because his body is the instrument of his soul.
5) In *Shemonah Perakim* chapter 2, Maimonides enumerates examples of the moral virtues, such as, moderation, liberality, honesty, meekness, humility, and contentedness. In chapter 4, he repeatedly explains that these moral virtues are between two extremes, for instance, liberality is the mean between sordidness and extravagance. See also, *Mishneh Torah, Sefer Ha-Madda* (the Book of Knowledge)*, Hilchot Deot* 1 and 2.
6) In *Shemonah Perakim* chapter 4, Maimonides argues that the Law of the Lord aims at man's following the path of moderation.
7) In *Shemonah Perakim* chapter 2, Maimonides explains that the intellectual virtues belonging to

rational faculty are; 1) wisdom, which is the knowledge of the direct and indirect causes of things, and 2) reason, consisting of inborn reason, the acquired intellect, and intellectual cleverness.

8) In the *Guide* III: 34, Maimonides argues that the Law ought not to be dependent on either time or place, but ought to be absolute and universal.
9) In the *Guide* I: 51, Maimonides enumerates the things which do not need proof of demonstration: the existence of motion, the existence of man's ability to act, the manifestations of generation and corruption, the natures of the things that are apparent to the senses.
10) In the *Guide* I:72, Maimonides wrote as follows: 'Know that it behoved us to compare the relation obtaining between God and the world to that obtaining between the acquired intellect and man; this intellect is not a faculty in the body but is truly separate from the organic body and overflows toward it.'
11) Hava Tirosh-Samuelson expounds that man obtains knowledge from two directions. She wrote: 'Maimonides indicated that knowledge is a process that proceeds in two directions, from the bottom up and from the top down. From the "bottom up" the acquisition of knowledge involves the extraction of intelligible universals from data gathered by the senses.' See, Hava Tirosh-Samuelson. (2003). *Happiness in Premodern Judaism –Virtue, Knowledge, and Well-Being.* Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, p. 210.
12) In the *Guide* III: 35-49, Maimonides expatiates upon God's commandments by dividing them into fourteen classes.
13) *Commentary on the Mishnah, Aboth,* 5:6 and 2:10.
14) See, the *Guide* III: 39, in which Maimonides explains the commandments concerning the weak and the poor.
15) See, the *Guide* III: 41, where Maimonides explains the commandments relating to punishment. In *Shemonah Perakim* chapter 8, Maimonides emphasises that man can decide what to do or what not to do by his own free will, therefore, 'the acquisition of virtues and vices is entirely in the power of man.'
16) *Genesis Rabbah* 35:3, *in fine.*
17) Cf. Exod. 34:6-7; *Guide*, I: 51, 52.
18) In *Shemonah Perakim* chapter 5, Maimonides maintains that perfection of man depends on the faculties of each person's soul; 'If there be found a man who has accomplished this -- that is, one who exerts all the faculties of his soul, and directs them towards the sole ideal of comprehending God, using all his powers of mind and body, be they great or small, for the attainment of that which leads directly or indirectly to virtue – I would place him in a rank not lower than that of the prophets.'
19) Hava Tirosh-Samuelson annotates this point as follows: 'Now it appears that Maimonides identifies human perfection not with the possession of abstract, theoretical knowledge, but rather with *action*, as the Torah itself prescribes when it enjoins humans "to walk in God's ways."' See, Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, *op. cit.*, p. 214.
20) B.T., Yebamoth, 71a; B.T., Baba Metsi'a, 31b.

A Comparative Analysis of Kabbalistic and Ismā`īlī World Cycles

Shinichi Yamamoto

1. Introduction

Ismā`īlism and Kabbalah have several idiosyncratic characteristics in common. For instance, both of them share as their esoteric doctrines the Neoplatonic emanation, the Gnostic Primordial Adam and the idea that letters played a formative role in the creation of the world.[1)] Among them the most remarkable is the doctrine of the world cycle or cyclical time.[2)] Several significant analyses have been undertaken to date, but their comparative research deals with only a small part of their similarities.[3)] The major reason is a dearth of clear historical evidence that can bridge the gap between Ismā`īlism and Kabbalah. Otherwise put, we have little material from either side that merits being compared in a philological and historical manner. My purpose in this paper, therefore, is not to search for an historical connection between them but to analyze logical structures in both Ismā`īlī and Kabbalistic world cycles. The heptad cycles in world history, paradigmatic perspective of religious laws and antinomism will be surveyed as similar but independent features.

And I will extend my observation to the later crystallization of their antinomistic proclivity. Their esoteric theories of cyclical time subsequently gave rise to messianic and eschatological movements: Nizārism and Sabbateanism. The former is one of the branches of Ismā`īlism in the 12th century; the latter had its root in Kabbalah and prevailed from the Ottoman Empire to all the Jewish communities. And last but not the least, both of them ended in failure without the terrestrial sovereignty of which they had dreamt becoming a reality. This is likely to be the inevitable consequence of realizing the theory of the world cycles. The present paper is the first to shed light on the common fate of the two messianic phenomena.

2. Cyclical Time in Ismā`īlism and Kabbalah

In Ismā`īlism the creation myth is extended to cover the whole monotheistic history. It is considered to be made up of six periods and a seventh period, just as God created the world in six days and afterwards rested on the seventh day. Each period was inaugurated by a prophet (*nabī*), also known

as an enunciator (*nāṭiq*), who announced a new revelation (*tanzīl*) to human beings. Each of the seven prophets was assisted by an executor of his will, also called a legate (*waṣī*). The legate transmitted the esoteric teaching to the seven Imāms. The last Imām became the new prophet at the onset of the next cycle. The prophets were as follows: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. In the current sixth period, Muḥammad was a prophet and Alī was his legate; the last Imām who is to be designated as the seventh prophet will be a messianic figure called Qāim or Mahdī, in the final phase of human history. Thus the Ismā`īlī historical process consists of double septimal structures. There appear seven sets of prophets, legates and Imāms in seven periods. The seventh cycle is supposed to culminate in "the Great Resurrection (*Qiyāmat al-Qiyāmat*)," which Qāim will open as the herald of the new world.

Another key principle is the dichotomous viewpoints between "the period of Openness (*dawr al-kashf*)" and "the period of Occultation" (*dawr al-satr*); the former period represents the exoteric meaning (*ẓāhir*) of the Quran while the latter the esoteric meaning (*bāṭin*). The Quran used to be understood according to the esoteric meaning in "the period of Openness" and no laws were required at the outset, but the first demonic figure, Iblīs deprived Adam of the secret of the missionary (*da`wā*).[4] As a result, "the period of Openness" was over and "the period of Occultation" started, when exoteric and esoteric understanding could not be discerned. The seventh prophet Qāim would resume the primordial "Openness." This cyclical time and the double meanings of the Quran were shared by other early mainstream theologians, such as Abu Yā`qūb al-Sijistānī (10c), Ḥamīd al-Kirmānī (d. 1017) and Nasir-e Khosraw (1004–1088).

The heptad cyclical time as a historical process was not a unique idea discovered merely in Ismā`īlism. The Jewish version of world cycle (*torat ha-shemittot*) began occupying a certain position in the 13th-century Kabbalistic literature in Catalonia. The Kabbalists such as Nahmanides and Menahem Reccanati saw this idea as an esoteric doctrine.[5] Afterwards, *the Book of Shape* (*Sefer ha-Temunah*), the most significant book regarding the world cycle, was composed in the 14th century by an anonymous author in southern France or more possibly in the Byzantium.[6] It discusses not only the world cycle but also the meaning of the shapes of the Hebrew letters. Throughout the history of Kabbalah, this doctrine has been a quintessential theory for part of the Kabbalists, who argued not only about terrestrial time but also about cosmic eschatology. In general, they postulated that one world cycle has seven thousand years and recurs seven times. They amount to forty-nine thousand years; and another millennium follows them. It is called "the Great Jubilee (*ha-Yovel ha-Gadol*)." The world, all told, amounts to fifty thousand years.

In this case as well, it is obvious that they got this idea from the biblical creation and one of the

divine commandments given to Moses and the Israelites.[7] And as understood form the term *shemittah*, which comes after seven times seven years in the fiftieth or jubilee year (*shenat ha-yovel*), the Israelites were supposed to return their possessions such as slaves and fields to how they used to be, or to liberate them from their working period.[8] In addition, unlike the Isma`ili world cycle, the Kabbalistic version has another later source: the Talmud. Many of the exponents of this theory refer to the following Talmudic dicta. The Talmudic rabbis, drawing on the biblical passages cited above, extended the earthly cyclical time to cosmic history. "R. Kattina said: Six thousand years shall the world exist, and one (thousand), it shall be desolate, as it is written, 'And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day' (Isaiah 2:11)." And, "Tanna debe Eliyyahu teaches: The world is to exist six thousand years. In the first two thousand there was desolation; two thousand years the Torah flourished; and the next two thousand years is the Messianic era."[9] According to these passages, the world lasts for six thousand years. Afterwards, the world will collapse during the final thousand years.

The Kabbalistic innovation in the world cycle is the introduction of plurality into the Torah. According to the Bible, God gave the Torah to Moses at Mt Sinai. Some Kabbalists revealed that this Torah *is* valid only in our seven-thousand-year generation. Rather there *was* and *will be* other Torahs that have other legal dimensions. Thus the Mosaic Torah in our period will become void at the end of seven thousand years; the new Torah will determine the future paradigm. The crux of this idea is that the current Torah lacks purity and wholeness because of God's stern judgment, in which the prohibitions in the biblical law have their origin.

The Ismā`īlī version is unclear about the number of years and itemizes heroic figures instead, whereas the time scale is more unequivocal and no biblical figures are mentioned in *the Book of Shape*. Be that as it may, there is a striking similitude between Ismā`īlī and Kabbalistic cyclical time. The heptad cyclical time has eschatological and messianic hue in the both versions.

Furthermore, esoteric understanding of their canons gave birth to an antinomistic idea; both of them presume that the current cannon or interpretation is legitimate exclusively in the current world cycle only. Their relativistic perspectives postulate plural paradigms changeable from cycle to cycle, and the meanings of the Quran and the Bible are not an ever-lasting single norm. In the case of Isma`ilism, on the one hand, the earliest theologians believed that Muḥammad ibn Ismā`īlī would reappear as the Qāim, abrogate the current *sharī'at*, and bring about "the Great Resurrection". This antinomistic tone took clearer shape in the teaching of Duruz in the 11th century and afterwards Nizārism in the 12th century, both of which denounced the eternal validity of the *sharī'at*, and the latter put an emphatic point on the abolition of all the traditional laws. On the other hand, the

Kabbalistic world cycle and its antinomistic interpretation were adapted and elaborated by Sabbateanism in the 17th century. The self-proclaimed messiah, Sabbatai Tzevi was believed to abrogate the Mosaic Torah (*Torah de-Beriah*) and bring about the new Torah (*Torah de-Atzilut*) in the face of the dawn of the new era. Some of his followers took it to mean that they were discharged from the yoke of the commandments only through believing their messiah.

There are as many differences as similarities between the world cycle of Ismā`īlism and Kabbalah. Among them the most crucial is that in the Ismā`īlī version seven eras have already occurred in the history as we know it, whereas in Kabbalah the cycle in which we are now living is one of the seven cycles. Even so, each of the cycles has its own paradigmatic law, and it is to be abrogated at the end of the current cycle and renewed for the forthcoming redemption. This antinomistic idea triggered messianic and eschatological phenomena in both Ismā`īlism and Kabbalah. In the following chapters, I will offer a brief analysis of them in order to prepare the further investigation.

3. The Case of Nizārī Ismā`īlism

In 1164, Ḥasan II (d.1166), a leader of Nizārī Ismā`īli*sm,* proclaimed the end of "the period of Occultation" and the beginning of "the Great Resurrection" in front of his followers at the fortress of Alamūt in today's Qazvin Province, northern Iran.[10] According to Ḥasan II's teaching, "the Great Resurrection," an accredited doctrine of early Ismā`īlism, had come and he was the Caliph of "the Qāim of the Resurrection." The believers were able to attain the true sense of religious laws (*bāṭin*) through the 'hidden' Imām, and furthermore *sharī'at* had been abrogated in "the Great Resurrection." According to Corbin, the observation of *discipline de l'arcane* at Alamūt was a triumph of the spiritual exegesis (*tawīl*) and a return to the truth (*ḥaqīqat*) on the emergence of "the Qāim of the Resurrection" (*zohur-e Qāim al-Qiyāmāt*).[11] Howevere, to Corbin's view it must be added that this proclamation was indubitably immersed in antinomistic eschatology.

In the words of Rāshid al-Dīn Ṭabīb (d. 1318), a contemporary Persian historian, when Ḥasan II proclaimed the coming of the new era: "He mounted the pulpit, which faced toward the Qibla and declared to the comrades: someone had come to him in secret from the leader, that is the supposed Imām, who was missing and nonexistent, and had brought an address, for their enlightenment, setting forth the doctrines of their faith. Then from the top of the pulpit he presented a clear and eloquent epistle, and at the end of the address he said, the Imām of our time sends you blessings and compassion, calling you his specially selected servants. He has lifted from you the burden of the obligation of the *sharī'at* and has brought you the Resurrection."[12] And a Nizārī source extols the grandeur of Ḥasan

II: "Our Lord (*mawlā-nā*), the Qāim of the Ressurection, […] is the Lord of all things in existence; he is the Lord who is the Absolute Existence (*wojūd-e motlaq*); He is all, there is no existence outside of him; all that is comes from him. He opens the gate of his mercy, making all, by the light of his knowledge, see, hear, speak, and live in eternity."[13] In this passage "our lord" indicates Ḥasan II as Imām and Qāim.[14] He addressed the audience: "If they firmly believed, and seek for the Truth, they shall attain perfect knowledge (of Imām); they will know that Our Lord the Qāim of the Resurrection always is present in the world, always was, and always will be."[15] Even if the stories are embellished to dramatize the event, it is highly possible that Ḥasan II embarked on the spiritual revival of the original Nizārī Ismā`īlism.

The breach of the *sharī'at* was regarded as a symbolical action to marking the end of the legal period (*dawr-i sharī'at*) and the dawn of "the Great Resurrection." The announcement took place during Ramaḍān. Although Muslims are supposed to fast to commemorate the revelation of the Quran to the prophet Muḥammad, after Ḥasan II had delivered a solemn address in Arabic, "then he set up a table and seated people to break the fast; they made merry and exulted in the manner of the ritual festivals. He said, today is the Festival. Even after that the *malāḥida* [heretics] called the 17th of Ramaḍān the Festival of Resurrection; on that day they used to show their joy with wine and repose, and used to play and make entertainment openly."[16] According to Hodgson, it might have been more suitable to change the day of Alī's death to the day of the resurrection of the dead and the advent of the Imām, and put an end to the rule of *taqiyya*.[17]

However, despite this widely accepted description, there is no report of their indulging in any immoral and libertine customs. As Daftary attentively notes, the historical account of the declaration of "the Great Resurrection" is based on some Persian historians and Nizārī works of later times, and no contemporary internal sources have survived from Ḥasan II's days. Considering the fact that many Nizārīs continued to follow the *sharī'at* after the declaration, the later historical reports do not suffice to determine the actual influence on the whole community.[18] Thus a more crucial sense should be added to their symbolic banquet. The revolution that Ḥasan II tried to bring about might not have been the virtual abrogation of all the law, but a new hegemony over Ismā`īlism through would-be Caliphate. He believed that the claim of the true sense of religious laws would give a firm grounding to the newly established authority of Nizārism.

4. The Case of Sabbateanism

In 1665, Sabbatai Tzevi (1626–1676), an Ottoman Jew from Smyrna (modern-day İzmir),

proclaimed himself the long-awaited messiah, supported by his prophet Nathan Benjamin Ashkenazi (1643–1680), also know as Nathan of Gaza. Nathan gained fame as a remarkable Kabbalist in Gaza, where Sabbatai Tzevi called himself "the anointed of the God of Jacob (*Meshiaḥ Elohe Ya`aqov*)." This proclamation was caused not only by Nathan's conviction in Sabbatai Tzevi's messiahship but also by Sabbatai Tzevi's mystical interpretation of Nathan's glossolalic prophecy.[19] But Nathan of Gaza was no less an intellectual propagandist of their messianic scheme than a numinous medium. He wrote a fair number of letters and penitential documents, calling for repentance to hail Sabbatai Tzevi as the messiah, to many Jewish communities from North Africa to Europe. The Kabbalist with great erudition and the messiah with spiritual charisma certainly gave vent to the eschatological atmosphere of the period.

In 1666, there happened a catalytic event; Sabbatai Tzevi, who should have brought about redemption to all believers, converted to Islam. At this juncture, Sabbateanism as a mass movement was over, and the historical threshold of 'heresy' was laid down. However, for the Sabbatean Kabbalists, his apostasy was not a mere setback in the least but a symbolic mission that only the true messiah could perform. Those who did not surrender their belief in Sabbatai Tzevi tried to discover the secret of this seemingly tragic denouement. No wonder Nathan was amongst them. He penned several Kabbalistic treatises in the aftermath of the apostasy, declaring that not merely Sabbatai Tzevi but all believers who still believed in him would be redeemed in the coming messianic age. In the new stage of history, the current commandments (*mitzvot*) also known as *Torah de-Beriah* were to be abolished and the new Torah, or *Torah de-Atzilut*, would be given to them. So-called Sabbatean antinomism had roots deep in the esoteric idea of the double Torahs. The antinomistic foundation that Nathan laid originated from the classic Kabbalistic doctrines. One of the most remarkable is the impact of the antinomistic theory of the world cycle.[20]

Nathan wrote that the appearance of Sabbatai Tzevi was a good omen for the new *shemittah*, and the redemptive era was about to commence. Sabbatai Tzevi was notorious for his blasphemous behavior and transgression of commandments, but Nathan justified this on the grounds that the true messiah was free to break the old prescriptions and customs. So Nathan depicted Sabbatai Tzevi as a transcendental persona who could stand between good and evil. However, it is noteworthy that he never recommended conversion to the followers. On the contrary, he advised them not to approach their messiah when he received the heavenly illumination so that they could eschew being converted to Islam.[21] In Salonika, he taught Kabbalistic piety to his disciples, but there is no trace of antinomistic or unlawful inclination.

In order to understand his true intention, we need to refer to his version of the world cycle. Nathan

revealed his idea in *the Book of Creation* (*Sefer ha-Beriah*), which was authored around 1670. He did not calculate the number of years for the messianic days probably because everything became obscure after Sabbatai Tzevi's conversion. Instead, his emphasis is on the pure belief in the messiah and the penitential effort for the messianic era. In *the Book of Creation*, he remarks: "When the affair of the gates finishes (the world will have come to the end), fifty thousand generations, which will arrive in the seven world cycles of the Jubilee, will also finish. […] The details of years in each generation are not discerned because some expand them and others reduce them. […] There is no preciseness. For all the issues are dependent upon what human beings choose. […] Even the number of two thousand years is not determined. The number is likely to dwindle in accordance with that of the generations."[22] Nathan obviously reconciles himself to the virtual failure of his messianic agenda. He no longer insisted on immediate redemption; the modest attitude toward the messianic era in the future is more discernible in this passage.[23]

Some of the followers of Sabbatai Tzevi, unlike the majority of the Sabbateans, converted to Islam in Salonika and changed their traditional Jewish customs and calendars into the original Sabbatean version. They claimed the coming of the new *shemittah* and the life of *Torah de-Atzilut*. But Nathan's interpretation of the world cycle conforms to the fact that many of the Sabbatean Kabbalists chose to remain in Judaism after the messiah's apostasy.

5. Conclusion

It is practically impossible to demonstrate the influence of Ismā`īlism on Kabbalah. Ismā`īlism flourished in Egypt, Syria, Iran and Yemen from the 9th to the 12th century, whereas the Kabbalistic world cycle appeared in northern Spain in the 13th century. The origin of *the Book of Shape* might be Provence or Byzantium in the 14th century. The two trends do not in the least overlap in terms of time and geography.

However, the intriguing fact about this theory is that both of them caused antinomistic messianic movements, which finally resulted in the failure and frustration of their messianic scheme. Both Ḥasan II and Sabbatai Tzevi could not realize true redemption. Afterwards, their successors attenuated the radical doctrines and adapted themselves to the status quo or the unredeemed reality. This is the unavoidable terminus of the antinomistic theory of the world cycle.[24]

Notes

1) The divine archetype of Adam has a Gnosticistic origin. The Great Human (*Insān Kabīr*) and its emanated beings in the Ismā`īlī hierarchical theory is, however, a fusion of Gnostic and Arabo-Persian Neoplatonic versions. Corbin points out the similitude between the Angel Zervān of Mazdaism and the Spiritual Adam (*Adam Rūḥānī*) of Ismā`īlism. Henri Corbin, *Temps cyclique et gnose ismaélienne* (Paris, 1982), 49. In this regard, the Primordial Adam (*Adam Qadmon*) in Kabbalah is likely to be placed as a subsequent development of the Ismā`īlī spiritual human. The Gnostic origin of the Primordial Man is argued by Scholem. Gershom Scholem, *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbala* (Berlin, 1962), 123–126. On the *Kūnī-Qadar* cosmogony, Halm draws on Abu Yā`qūb al-Sijistānī's *the Book of Pride*. See Heinz Halm, *Kosmologie und Heilslehre der Frühen Ismā`īlīya: Eine Studie zur Islamischen Gnosis* (Wiesbaden, 1978), 53–66; 209–213. On the version of Abū `Isā al-Murshid's, see Samuel Miklos Stern, *Studies in Early Ismā`īlism* (Jerusalem, 1983), 6–26. Suffice it here to state that the creative power of the Hebrew alphabets are prevalent in kabbalistic literature from *Sefer Yetzirah* through *Sefer ha-Zohar*.
2) Specifically on the parallel of the doctrine of the world cycle between Ismā`īlism and Kabbalah, see Shlomo Pines, "Shī`ite Terms of Conceptions in Judah Halevi's Kuzari," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980), 243–247; Gershom Scholem, *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbala*, 400; Sarah Heller Wilensky, "Messianism, Eschatology and Utopia in the Philosophico-Mythical Trend of the Thirteenth-Century Kabbalah" [Hebrew], *Messianism and Eschatology: A Collection of Essays*, ed. by Zvi Baras (Jerusalem, 1983), 230; Haviva Pedaya, *Nahmanides: Cyclical Time and Holy Text* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv, 2003), 21–23.
3) Some scholars have assumed the influence of Ismā`īlism upon Kabbalah. Shlomo Pines, "La longue recension de la Théologie d'Aristote dans ses rapports avec la doctrines ismaélienne," *Revue des Etudes Islamiques* 22 (1954), 7–20; Moshe Idel, "The Sefirot above the Sefirot," *Tarbiz* 51 (1981–82), 270–273; Amos Goldreich, "The Theology of the Iyyun Circle and a Possible Source of the Term '*Aḥadut Shava*'" [Hebrew], *The Beginnings of Jewish Mysticism in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Joseph Dan (Jerusalem, 1987), 149–156.
4) Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins: The Struggle of the Early Nizārī Ismā`īlīs against the Islamic World* (Chicago, 1955), 232.
5) On the general introduction to the kabbalistic world cycle, see Gershom Scholem, *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbala,* 407–420. Moshe Idel categorizes three types of time in Judaism, one of which is cosmic cyclical time with, or *macrochronos* in his terminology. Kabbalists offered variegated types of world cycle theories. On more bibliographical information, see Moshe Idel, ""Higher than Time": Observations on Some Concepts of Time in Kabbalah and Hasidism," *Time and Eternity in Jewish Mysticism: That Which is Before and That Which is After*, ed. by Brian Ogren (Leiden, 2015), 179–185.
6) The place of composition of *the Book of the Shape*, see Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy: A Survey*

(New Haven, 2010), 290–291.

7) Exodus 20:8–11.
8) Leviticus 25:8, 10
9) The Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 97a.
10) On the eschatology of Nizārī Ismā`īlism, I refer to Henry Corbin, "Symboles choisis de la Roseraie du Mystère, de Mahmūd Shabestarī*," Trilogie Ismaélienne* (Paris, 1961), (3)–(21); Jorunn J. Buckley, "The Nszari Ismailites' Abolishment of The Sharia: During the "Great Resurrection"of 1164 A.D./559 A.H.," *Studia Islamica* 60 (1984). 137–165. On the historiography of Nizārism during the Alamūt period, I refer to Hodgson, *Ibid.*; Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā`īlīs: Their History and Doctrines*, Cambridge University Press 1990. 324–434.
11) Corbin, *Ibid.*, (5).
12) Hodgson, *Ibid.*, 149–150. Rashīd al-Dīn Ṭabīb's *Jāmi` al-Tawārīkh* (1310) is one of the earliest records from Alamūt period. Farhad Daftary, Historical Dictionary of the Ismailis (Lanham, 2012), 87–88.
13) *Kalam-i Pir: a treatise on Ismaili doctrine, also (wrongly) called Haft-Babi Shah Sayyid Nasir*, edited in original Persian and translated into English by W. Ivanow (Bombay, 1935), 61. See also Corbin's translation in Corbin, *ibid., Trilogie Ismaélienne*, (12).
14) *Kalam-i Pir*, 56.
15) *Ibid.*, 62.
16) Hodgson, *Ibid.*, 150. See also 155–159.
17) In the time of "the Great Resurrection," they thought that there was no need to dissimilate their religious identity. *Ibid.*, 156.
18) Daftary, *The Ismā`īlīs*, 390–391.
19) Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Ṣevi: The Mystical Messiah* (Princeton, 1976), 203–223.
20) As far as I know, among Nathan and his disciples' writings, the only reference to *the Book of Shape* is found in the epistle of Abraham Peretz. Gershom Scholem, "The Commentary on Psalms from Sabbatai Tzevi's Circle in Adrianople," *Researches in Sabbateanism* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv, 1991), 156–157. Abraham Peretz's understanding of the world cycle is congruent with that of Nathan.
21) Gershom Scholem, "The Epistle Magen Abraham," *Researches in Sabbateanism*, 94.
22) Nathan Benjamin Ashkenazi, *The Book of Creation* Part. 2, 29b–30a. Ms. Berlin Oct. 3057. My translation is based on the unpublished draft typed by Chaim Wirszubski. Gershom Scholem Library Catalogue R. 5079.1. in the National Library of Israel.
23) For more details on Nathan's retreat to a moderate attitude toward messianism, see Shinichi Yamamoto, *The Origins and Developments of Sabbatean Antinomism,* Doctral Dissertation [Japanese] (University of Tokyo, 2011), 25–113.
24) This paper is just a part of my ongoing research of the world cycle and its repercussion on Nizārī Ismā`īlism and Sabbateanism.

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Conference Program

I　2/28 (Sat.)

Session A: Kabbalah – Jewish Mysticism

カバラー ― ユダヤ神秘主義

13:00 – 15:00　Public Lecture (Chapel)

- Prof. Dr. Boaz Huss (Ben Gurion University, Israel)

"The New Age of Kabbalah: Kabbalah and its Contemporary Manifestations"

カバラーのニューエイジ：現代社会におけるカバラーの発現

Chair: Prof. Etsuko Katsumata

Session B: Jewish Mysticism and its Research

ユダヤ神秘主義とその研究

15:30 – 17:30　Workshop (G31)

- Prof. Dr. Boaz Huss (Ben Gurion University, Israel)

"The Invention of Jewish Mysticism: Orientalism, Jewish Nationalism, and the Academic Study of Kabbalah"

ユダヤ神秘主義の発明：オリエンタリズム、ユダヤ・ナショナリズム、学術的カバラー研究

Chair: Prof. Ada Taggar-Cohen

Comment: Dr. Doron B. Cohen

18:00 – 20:00　Reception at Uenoyama restaurant

II　3/1 (Sun.)

Session C: Religious issues in Historical and Textual Perspectives *(Young Scholars' Workshop)*

歴史的・史料的観点からみた宗教的論点

9:00 – 12:00　Workshop (G31)

9:00 – 9:05　Opening Remarks: Dr. Kotaro Hiraoka

9:05 – 9:35 Mr. Hajime Yamamoto

Research Fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science

(Kyoto University)

"Communication between the Gods and the Hittite King"

ヒッタイトにおける神々と王の「交流」

9:35 – 10:05 Mr. Koji Osawa

Research Fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science

(Tokyo University)

"The Interpretations of the Golden Calf Story in Exodus 32:

Exploring Jewish-Christian Relationships in Late Antiquity"

出エジプト記 32 章金の子牛像事件解釈―古代末期のユダヤ教・

キリスト教関係の考察―

10:05 – 10:15 Coffee Break

10:15 – 10:45 Ms. Aiko Kanda

(Th.D candidate of Doshisha University)

"Conditions for attaining true knowledge of God:

according to the *Guide of the Perplexed* III:52-54"

真の神知識に達するための条件－『迷える者の手引き』

第 3 部 52 章 -54 章より

10:45 – 11:15 Dr. Shinichi Yamamoto

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(Kyoto University)

"A Comparative Analysis of Kabbalistic and Ismā`īlī World Cycles"

イスマイール派とカバラーの世界周期論

11:15 – 11:55 Open Discussion

11:55 – 12:00 Closing Remarks

III 3/1 (Sun.)

Session D: Sufism – Islamic Mysticism

スーフィズム―イスラーム神秘主義

13:00 – 15:00 Public Lecture (Chapel)

- Prof. Dr. Mark Sedgwick (Aarhus University, Denmark)

"Islamic Mysticism and Neo-Sufism"

イスラーム神秘主義とネオ・スーフィズム

Chair: Prof. Teruaki Moriyama

Session E: Islamic Mysticism and its Research

イスラーム神秘主義とその研究

15:30 – 17:30 Workshop (G31)

- Prof. Dr. Mark Sedgwick (Aarhus University, Denmark)

"Neo-Sufism in the 1960s: Idries Shah"

1960 年代におけるネオ・スーフィズム：イドリース・シャー

Chair: Prof. Ada Taggar-Cohen

Comment: Prof. Teruaki Moriyama

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Editorial comment
編集後記

Ada Taggar-Cohen
アダ タガー・コヘン

The topic of *Kabbalah and Sufism* presented and discussed in this conference gave us the opportunity to bring together research on Judaism and Islam in a historical perspective, with a strong slant on modern world esoteric and mystical beliefs and practices. In this our modern era, these esoteric religious beliefs originating in Judaism and Islam, have been developed in an attempt to appeal to people of different religions and denominations.

New-age activity of "Kabbalistic practice" has moved away from the origins of the thirteenth century Kabbalah and the same process seems to have occurred with Sufism. The core of the conference focused on these developments. Religious beliefs and customs are both based on the concept of ancient traditions searching for the divine even though in modern times, they have adjusted to changes in society in the search for a wider audience. The participation of two eminent scholars, each a specialist in one or other of the two fields and the creation of a common dialogue for these two different religious groups with similar religious activities, deepens our appreciation and understanding of how the interdisciplinary study of religions can help comprehend a modern phenomenon shared by both traditions.

Well-known representations of the two traditions appear on the cover of this volume: Kabbalah is represented by the "Tree of Life – the Ten *Sefirot*" showing the ten forces by which God manifested his powers; by interacting with these powers, human beings believe they can cause God to intervene in the world with compassion and judgment. Sufism is represented by the image of the Dervish who seeks to reach universal values of love and divinity through ecstatic dance.

「カバラーとスーフィズム」というテーマのもと議論した本会議は、特に現代における秘儀的信仰と実践に比重を置きつつ、歴史的観点からユダヤ教研究とイスラーム研究を統べ合わせる、またとない機会であった。

我々の生きる現代社会において、ユダヤ教・イスラームに端を発する秘儀的な信仰は、異なる宗教や宗派に属する人々の心に訴えかけるという意図のもと発展を続けてきた。

ニューエイジ運動としての「カバラー実践」は、13世紀当初のカバラーからは様変わりした。スーフィズムにも同じことが起こったと言えるだろう。本会議の議論の中心は、カバラーとスーフィズムの発展過程にあった。これら宗教的信仰と宗教的慣習は、どちらも神なるものを探し求めるという古くからの伝統的な観念に基づいており、現代社会においても、より多くの人々に伝わるように時流に応じて変化してきたのである。本会議には、カバラー・スーフィズムそれぞれの専門家であり、類似した宗教的実践を共有するこれら二つの異なる思想の相互対話の場を創造してきた二人の卓越した研究者が出席して下さった。それにより、宗教を学際的に研究することが、二つの思想的潮流に見られる新しい現象を把握することに役立つという事実を再認識し、より理解を深めることができた。

この巻の表紙には、カバラーとスーフィズムを象徴する二つのシンボルがあしらわれている。カバラーを象徴するものとして、「生命の樹―10のスフィロット」を配した。これは、神が自らの力を顕在化させた10の属性である。信仰者の間では、10の属性を相互に作用させることにより、神が同情と審判を持ってしてこの世へ介在するのだと信じられている。一方スーフィズムを象徴するものとして、恍惚状態で踊ることによって、愛と神性の普遍的価値に至ろうとする、デルヴィーシュを取り上げた。

Previous Publications in this Series **本シリーズ既刊号**

CJS 1

Jewish Studies in Current Academic Research in Japan – Papers & Discussions of the 1st CISMOR Conference on Jewish Studies, 10 December 2005. Edited by Ada Taggar-Cohen and Isaiah Teshima; Published March 2006; 140 pp.

Foreword & Table of Contents in English and Japanese; Papers and Editorial Comment in Japanese only.

第一回 CISMOR ユダヤ学会議「日本におけるユダヤ学の現状」。編集：アダ タガー・コヘン、手島勲矢・ 発行日 2006 年 3 月 31 日・140 ページ。巻頭言、目次：英語、日本語・論文、編集後記：日本語。

CJS 2

Various Aspects in Jewish Studies: Surrounding Cultures and Dialogue – Papers & Discussions of the 2nd CISMOR Conference on Jewish Studies, 9 December 2006. Edited by Ada Taggar-Cohen and Isaiah Teshima; Published March 2007; 148 pp.

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第二回 CISMOR ユダヤ学会議「ユダヤ学の多様性：取り巻く異文化との対話」。編集：アダ タガー・コヘン、手島勲矢・ 発行日 2007 年 12 月 9 日・148 ページ。目次：英語、日本語・巻頭言、論文、編集後記：日本語。

CJS 3

The Languages of the Jews and their Convergence with Neighboring Cultures through History – Papers & Discussions of the 3rd CISMOR Conference on Jewish Studies, 8 December 2007. Edited by Ada Taggar-Cohen and Etsuko Katsumata; Published March 2008; 154 pp.

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第三回 CISMOR ユダヤ学会議「ユダヤの言語、隣接文化との歴史的習合」。編集：アダ タガー・コヘン、勝又悦子・発行日 2008 年 3 月 31 日・154 ページ。巻頭言、目次：英語、日本語・論文、編集後記：日本語。

CJS 4

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第四回 CISMOR ユダヤ学会議「ユダヤ教従、キリスト教従、ムスリムの相互作用－歴史的、文化的見地から」。編集：アダ タガー・コヘン、勝又悦子・ 発行日 2011 年 10 月 28 日・100 ページ。巻頭言、目次：英語、日本語 ・論文：日本語もしくは英語・編集後記：日本語・英語要旨一覧。

CJS 5

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CJS 6

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第六回 CISMOR ユダヤ学会議「現代ユダヤ教における意義･日本文化との関係」。編集：アダ タガー・コヘン、勝又悦子、ドロン・B・コヘン・発行日 2013 年 6 月 15 日・180 ページ。巻頭言、序論、編集後記、目次：英語、日本語・論文：日本語もしくは英語。

CJS 7

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2015

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Kabbalah and Sufism — Esoteric Beliefs and Practices in Judaism and Islam in Modern Times

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