

Sufism in Latin Europe (France, Spain, Italy)

Francesco Piraino, PhD (KU Leuven)

Antonio de Diego González, PhD (University of Seville)

Introduction

Islam and Sufism are part of a tradition in Latin Europe that dates back to the Middle Ages (Arkoun 2006; Barone 2003; Ebstein 2014). Out of this long legacy, only a few Sufi authors have reached the contemporary collective memory, such as Ibn Masarra (d. 931) and Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 1240). This chapter will demonstrate, however, that such a lost legacy plays an important role in contemporary Sufi narratives. In fact, this legacy allows a historical legitimisation of the Islamic presence in Europe, often marginalised and reduced to an absolute alterity (Pace 2004), while enabling the revindication of a religious pluralism—often termed a “living together”—that seeks to invoke the “Andalusian *convivencia* [coexistence]” (Wolf 2009).

Since early in the history of Islam, Sufism has been a transnational phenomenon that carried Islamic civilisation to different regions (Salvatore 2018). Sufis have been religious authorities embodying Islamic orthodoxy (understood as a discourse on doctrines, moral and legal norms), but they also have been accommodative with respect to exogenous cultural influences and fluid identities (Veinstein and Popovic 1996). This never-ending dialogue between global and local, exogenous and endogenous, orthodox and heterodox, continues in contemporary Latin European Sufism. Latin European Sufism can today be described as a

complex phenomenon drawing from different sources: 1) “transplanted Sufism” (Hermansen 2004), formed by Sufi orders whose members are the first and second generation of migrants, strongly influenced by ethnic and cultural identities and bonds; 2) European esotericism, especially as derived from the works of René Guénon and Frithjof Schuon (Sedgwick 2004; Bisson 2007; Piraino 2016c; 2019a); 3) New Age culture (Hermansen 2004; O. Hammer 2004; Sedgwick 2009) or the “cultic milieu” (Wilson 1992) and 4) scholarly Sufism, which has often moved beyond an academic context to influence other spheres of contemporary Sufism (Laude 2010). These sources must be considered together as they all contribute, in various degrees, to the composition of Latin European Sufi orders.

Spain and Italy share a similar history of influxes of migrants that increased starting in the 1980s. The most important Muslim migrant communities in Italy are Moroccan, Albanian, Tunisian, Senegalese, Bangladeshi, and Pakistani (IDOS per Caritas/Migrantes 2010), and in Spain: Moroccan, Pakistani, and Senegalese (Observatorio Andalusi 2017). The first generation of Muslim migrants in Italy and Spain, generally belonging to the working class, are employed in agriculture or in the industrial and service sectors. Only beginning in the 2000s do we find the second generation of Muslim migrants seeking more diverse employment opportunities, while at the same time aspiring to cultural production within an Islamic framework (Frisina 2007). The French context is completely different, since the first Muslim migrants arrived at the beginning of the 20th century, due to the French colonial history in North Africa; here the most important communities are the Algerian, the Moroccan, and the Tunisian (Grim and Karim 2011). In France there are many public Muslim figures: intellectuals (Frégosi 2008), musicians (Joassin 2019), and scholars, many of whom, as explained below, are Sufis. Furthermore, there is an extensive debate about the place of Islam within French *laïcité* (Frégosi 2011). The French Muslim population is also more heterogeneous from a social class point of view compared to

that of Italy and Spain; in France, and especially Paris, many migrants come from the North African bourgeoisie, who settled abroad for education or business purposes (Vermeren 2005).

The current chapter describes global trends that affect Sufism prior to framing them in local contexts. Although the abovementioned sources of Latin European Sufism are similar across all Western countries, their outcomes often differ in diverse local settings. In order to comprehend both the complexity and common trends among different countries, we discuss Sufism in Latin Europe using eight categories: 1) De-Islamised Sufism; 2) Western esoteric Sufism; 3) Erudite Sufism; 4) Transplanted Sufism; 5) Anti-modern Sufism; 6) Fragmented Sufism; 7) Engaged Sufism; and 8) Public Sufism. These categories are ideal-types (Weber 1968) that could serve as useful instruments in comprehending multifaceted phenomena. The order in which these categories will be presented is both chronological and thematic. All of these categories are intertwined: individual Sufis and Sufi orders could shift from category to category according to the historical and geographical context, hence these categories are not fixed or exclusive. For example, the ‘Alāwiyya, founded at the beginning of the 20th century in Algeria, developed branches in France composed of Algerian migrants—hence a transplanted Sufism, but at the same time it developed independent branches formed only by European converts that could be described as “Western esoteric Sufism”; furthermore, this Sufi order hosted and hosts several intellectuals who compose “erudite Sufism”; and finally, with the present Shaykh Bentounes it is now transnational, engaged in social and cultural activities connected to interfaith dialogue as forms of “public” Sufism.

De-Islamised Sufism

According to the hagiographical literature, Hazrat Inayat Khan (1882-1927), born in Vadodara (formerly Baroda), India, was a Chishtī Sufi and a talented Hindustani musician

looking for a universal system in music (Bloch 1915). Following his Sufi master's suggestions, Inayat Khan left India, aiming at introducing Sufism to Western countries and longing for a harmonisation between the East and the West (Zia Inayat Khan 2006). The encounter of Inayat Khan with the Theosophical Society of Madame Blavatsky, Henry Steel Olcott, and William Quan Judge marked the foundation of the "Sufi Order". The Sufi Order was focused on universal truth embodied in a multi-faith ceremony known as the Universal Worship, rather than on exclusively Islamic and Sufi doctrines and practices. This process of de-Islamisation continued during the leadership of Inayat's son and successor Vilayat Inayat Khan (1916-2004), who welcomed influences from the Beat Generation and New Age culture (Knight 2012). The Sufi Order was renamed "the Sufi Order International" in 1968.¹ The process impacted the doctrines (reducing the importance of Islamic references), the practices (in some cases adapted, supported and replaced by eclectic religious rituals), and organisational structures (creating new hierarchies different from those typical of traditional Sufism). Alix Philippon well describes the participation of disciples coming from different religious backgrounds, looking for a spiritual experience, without questioning their religious or cultural belonging as a form of "uni-diversalism" (Philippon 2014). Starting from the 2000s, Vilayat's son Zia Inayat Khan (b. 1972) has been guiding this Sufi order, renamed the Inayati Order in 2000,² keeping its universal aspects, while deepening some Islamic dimensions (Philippon 2014), and reproducing certain Sufi organizational structures (Dickson and Xavier 2019).

Inayat Khan's books have been translated into Italian, French, and Spanish and issued by leading publishers. However, the Sufi Order International has developed only two centers in Latin Europe, one near Paris³ (France) and the other in Cala Jami⁴ in Sardinia (Italy). These centers, with few disciples and little impact on the public sphere, did not achieve the same

¹ <http://inayatiorder.org/our-new-name/> Last access 10/04/2019.

² <http://inayatiorder.org/our-new-name/> Last access 10/04/2019.

³ <http://inayatiorderfrance.org> Last access 14/01/2019.

⁴ <http://www.calajami.eu> Last access 14/01/2019.

success as achieved in some other European countries and the United States. There are two major reasons for this. First, regarding the historical context, the secularisation process, understood as the re-negotiation of religious traditions and reconfiguration of religious authorities (Hervieu-Léger 1993), that allowed the diffusion of new religious movements and New Age culture, started later in Latin Europe as compared to other Western countries. If the Sufi Order International, as one form of New Age religiosity, spread in the United States at the beginning of the 20th century and then reached its peak in the 1970s (Hanegraaff 1998), during the same period, Latin Europe was more conservative regarding religious matters. For example, Spain was living under the dictator Franco's "Catholic Nationalism" until 1975 (Payne 1984). On the other hand, when New Age culture started developing in Spain (Cornejo Valle and Blázquez Rodríguez 2017) and Italy (Pace 1999) during the 1980s and 1990s the Sufi Order International had already lost much of its energy. As we will show, other Sufi leaders were therefore more active and relevant to this new space. Second, the conceptualisation of a universal religion and/or universal religious experience was primarily developed in Latin Europe by other actors. These include Islamic and Sufi communities such as the Būdshīshiyya and 'Alāwiyya (Piraino 2017; 2019c; 2019b), Western esoteric trends such as Traditionalism (Sedgwick 2004; Laurant 2006), and interpretations of Sufi Islamic spirituality by Orientalists such as Louis Massignon and Henry Corbin (Laude 2010). Therefore, Latin Europeans longing for universal narratives of the religious experience had a number of other options.

Other de-Islamised Sufi movements include those related to the brothers Idries Shah (1924-1996) and Omar Ali Shah (1922-2005), particularly active in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. They represented Sufism as a timeless knowledge underlying all religions, while emphasizing its psychological and therapeutic dimension (Sedgwick 2016). These authors, in particular Idries Shah, were also quite influential in Latin Europe, publishing many books on Sufism and influencing the imagination of famous authors such as Doris Lessing and Paulo

Coehlo, who contributed to the de-Islamisation of Sufism in the cultural sphere (Sedgwick 2009). Successors to the Shah brothers in Latin Europe led a few groups of disciples, rather small and reserved, with little impact on Islamic communities and the public sphere. One of these groups was based in Arcos de la Frontera in Andalusia (Tarrés and Salguero 2010), where Omar Ali Shah, who was the more active in the Spanish speaking sphere, held annual gatherings and where he died.

Western Esoteric Sufism

René Guénon (1886-1951) is a key figure of 20th-century Western esotericism. His intellectual disciples, who came from different religious and intellectual backgrounds, gave life to the heterogeneous school of thought known as “Traditionalism” (Sedgwick 2004; Laurant 2006; Bisson 2013). René Guénon was born in Blois, France, and grew up in a bourgeois Catholic family. In 1904 he moved to Paris, where he attended university and began to frequent the local esoteric milieu. In the course of a few years, he came into contact with occultism, Freemasonry, and the Gnostic Church. The encounter with the “East”, including Hinduism and Islamic esotericism, was an important turning point in his life. Hinduism was the subject of his doctoral thesis and his first book (Guénon 1921) and, thanks to the mediation of the Swedish painter Ivan Aguéli, he joined the Shādhiliyya Order and later moved to Cairo, where he lived until his death. Guénon took the Muslim name of ‘Abd al-Wāḥid Yaḥyā.

Guénon’s areas of study were notably vast: he studied and wrote commentaries on Greek philosophy, Gnosticism, Christianity, Celtic religion, Judaism and Kabbalah, Islamic esotericism, Freemasonry, Hinduism, Alchemy, and Taoism. This all-embracing approach, including religious, spiritual, metaphysical, and also social phenomena, allowed him to write a new history of the world, focused on the sacred, that challenged 20th-century mainstream European narratives, focused as they were on the supposed superiority of a Western civilisation destined to inexorable progress (Bisson 2013). According to his interpretation, religions are

composed of two dimensions, one exoteric, expressed by rituals, dogmas and cosmologies, and the other esoteric/metaphysical, which conveys hidden supranational and universal truths (Guénon 1924b, 51). These truths or universal metaphysical principles are the reflection of a single “primordial tradition”(Guénon 1921), the essence of all religions. Following Guénon’s approach, all religions share the same metaphysical truth and differ only in their outward forms. Among religions, some have better preserved the connection with the primordial source, while others have almost totally lost it, becoming “simulacra”.

Guénon drew heavily on Hindu eschatology, borrowing the idea of cyclical evolution. Thus, the cycle in which modern and contemporary societies are inscribed is the *Kali Yuga*, the age of discord, or “the Dark or Iron Age” marked by spiritual corruption, violence and destruction (Guénon 1924a). Western modernity is a “perpetual carnival”(Guénon 1962, 113) where all values are reversed. Guénon addresses his criticism not only to materialism and scientific rationalism but also to new religious forms, such as spiritualism, occultism, the Theosophical Society, and the Jungian interpretation of religions, which he considered to be not only innovations but the “invisible engine” of the corruption of Western societies (Guénon 1950). In order to counter this spiritual and material decadence and devolution, Guénon looked to the East, where, he believed, religions preserved a deeper relation with the primordial tradition since the East possesses “the awareness of eternity” (Guénon 1924b, 95) which protects it from the nefarious effects of modernity.

Guénon can be considered an essential figure in the development of Sufism in Europe, and many Europeans, especially in France, Spain, Belgium, and Italy, discovered Sufism thanks to his books. Nowadays, his legacy extends beyond the Western esoteric milieu, his works are considered seminal not only in the counter culture milieu and among many mainstream-orthodox Muslims, but also in certain right-wing political and religious circles (Piraino 2016c; Sedgwick 2004; Bisson 2007).

Starting in the 1930s, a specific form of Sufism developed in Europe that was based on the idea of Traditionalism, formed almost exclusively among white Europeans, drawing upon Guénon's philosophy, and reproducing doctrines, practices, and organisational structures of Western esotericism (Piraino 2019a). The most important figures of this type of Sufism in Latin Europe are: Frithjof Schuon (1907-1998) (member of the 'Alāwiyya and later the founder of the Maryamiyya), Roger Maridort (1903–1977) (Darqāwiyya), Abdelhaqq García Varela, Yahya Olmedo ('Alāwiyya), and Abd al-Wahid Pallavicini (1926-2017) (Aḥmadiyya Idrīsiyya Shādhiliyya). Following Guénon's intellectual production in esoteric journals such as *Le Voile d'Isis* and *Études Traditionnelles*, these Sufi intellectuals also founded multiple journals: *Rivista di Studi Tradizionali*,⁵ *Rivista di Studi Metafisici*,⁶ and *Estudios Tradicionales*.⁷ As an example of the intertwining between Western esotericism and Sufism, we focus here on the case of Aḥmadiyya Idrīsiyya Shādhiliyya (AIS) which is still present today in Italy and France.

Abd al-Wahid Pallavicini was born in Milan in 1926 and grew up in a bourgeois Catholic family of aristocratic origins. Pallavicini converted to Islam in 1951, the same year his spiritual master, Guénon, died. In 1971, when in Singapore, Pallavicini found his spiritual guide in an AIS teacher, and later he founded an independent branch of this Order in Italy (Sedgwick 2004). In 1980, Pallavicini returned to Milan and wrote the book *In memoriam René Guénon* (Pallavicini 1981), thanks to which he became more widely known and welcomed his first disciples. Shortly afterwards, he founded the Centre of Metaphysical Studies, which brought together many Italian traditionalists. At the beginning of the 1990s, the AIS reached an important turning point: their intellectual debates, which had focused on metaphysics, gave way to political action now focused on interreligious relations. In 1993, Pallavicini founded the

⁵ http://www.tradizioneiniziatica.org/rivista_di_studi_tradizionali_di_torino.html Last access 14/01/2019.

⁶ <http://www.coreis.it/csm.htm> Last access 14/01/2019.

⁷ <http://www.estudiostradicionales.com> Last access 14/01/2019.

Associazione Internazionale per l'Informazione sull'Islam (International Association for Information on Islam), which in 1997 became the COREIS (Comunità Religiosa Islamica [Islamic Religious Community]). Since the beginning of the 2000s, the COREIS has achieved great success and today is a key partner of Italian institutions in the dialogue with Islam. Despite this high visibility, the COREIS has no more than a hundred followers. In 2017 Abd al-Wahid died in Milan at the age of 92, and his son Yahya Pallavicini is now leading this Sufi order.

We can grasp the process of (Western) esotericisation of the AIS, showing how Guénonian “forms of thought” (Faivre 2012) shaped the the movement. Guénon’s pivotal role is evident when we read Pallavicini’s book *Inner Islam* (Pallavicini 2013). Guénon is quoted 66 times versus 28 for the Prophet Muhammad. Pallavicini stressed that his mission was to bear witness to the metaphysical message: the “primordial tradition”, epitomised by Guénon, “whose work represents a true intellectual miracle, and fills six centuries of the absence of metaphysical perspective in the West, since the dissolution of the Order of the Templars in 1313” (Pallavicini 2013, 147–48).

According to Guénon, Europe can restore its metaphysical sources through a spiritual élite who will either guide the eschatological trajectory or postpone it (Guénon 1924b). In this perspective, the AIS proposes itself as the root of the European spiritual élite, whose aim would be to guide not only initiates but also other Europeans: “this work is the living demonstration that the intellectual élite has taken root in the West and works to thwart the hardened anti-spiritual forces” (Pallavicini 2011, 17). AIS is presented as being the last bastion against modernisation, the only religious movement capable of fulfilling the Guénonian prophecy of a spiritual élite saving the corrupt West.

The critique of modernity and the rehabilitation of a rejected metaphysical knowledge lost in European societies resonates with Wouter Hanegraaff’s definition of esotericism as “rejected knowledge” (Hanegraaff 2012). AIS claims the re-appropriation of a lost

metaphysical knowledge, inverting the stigma: rejecting the rejection. Furthermore, AIS metaphysical knowledge is absolute *à la* von Stuckrad: “a wisdom that is superior to other interpretations of cosmos and history [...] a vision of truth as a master key for answering all questions of humankind” (von Stuckrad 2005, 88).

This absolute knowledge therefore attempts to justify a political engagement that could be labelled as “metapolitics” (Bisson 2013). Metapolitics is not interested in the direct change of society; for the only possible means of improving the world cannot be implemented at the level of society, of the population, of politics—not even of religion—but only by aiming at the correction of the metaphysical imbalance through the re-establishment of metaphysical truth. This approach has been defined as “ecumenism from above” (Bisson 2007, 40), because it is not interested in influencing the general public but is reserved for a selected few. From a sociological point of view, the AIS conforms perfectly to the ideal-type of the sect: it is formed by a voluntary and coherent group which strives to be homogeneous, possesses an aristocratic spirit, and is in tension with the surrounding environment (Stark and Bainbridge 1985).

Starting from the 2010s, the AIS has been living through an important change: a gradual opening to others that could be called a process of “de-esotericisation”, understood as the process of expanding the Guénonian contours that established the framework discussed in the previous sections, since Guénon’s notion of esotericism had strictly defined the AIS’s forms of thought and practice. Thus metaphysical “absolute knowledge” is gradually opening up to other perspectives drawn from, for example, more traditional Sufi and Islamic knowledge, but also shifting toward contemporary social and natural sciences. For example, the AIS has allowed a sociologist to study the order, and there are debates about different epistemologies among its adherents, such as social sciences and systems philosophy (Guiderdoni 2012). This gradual opening up started with Abd al-Wahid Pallavicini, but it was boosted in Italy by Shaykh Yahya (Pallavicini’s son) and in France by Bruno Guiderdoni, a *khalīfa* (local spiritual leader). Yahya Pallavicini was born in 1965 and spent part of his youth between Switzerland, Japan (his

mother's country) and Italy, where he pursued his education. Bruno Guiderdoni is a renowned Muslim scientist working on the dialogue between Islam and science (Bigliardi 2014; Piraino 2014).

Erudite Sufism

René Guénon's legacy is not limited to its influence on Western esoteric Sufism, which thereby reproduced the doctrines, practices, and organisational structures of Western esotericism. While in some cases Guénonian intellectuals acquired a limited knowledge of the Arabic language and Islamic and Sufi doctrines, others further deepened their knowledge of Islamic theology, mastered Arabic, and participated in "traditional" Islamic Sufi orders. The Guénonian blueprint is still evident among these intellectuals, and key concepts such as the "primordial tradition", the "Kali Yuga", and "the esoteric initiation" continue to be discussed and embedded in their discussions of Islamic and Sufi doctrines. Nevertheless, for them, Guénon constitutes a starting point from which to discover Islamic Sufi authors, such as Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ibn ʿAṭāllāh (d. 1310). In contrast to other Guénonians, such as Roger Maridort and the Pallavicinis, these intellectuals do not claim to represent Guénonian orthodoxy. We describe these Guénonian intellectuals practicing and studying Sufism as "erudite Sufis".

Many of these "erudite" European Sufi intellectuals, both converts and legacy Muslims, work in the academic environment, employing methodologies and epistemologies typical of the humanities and social sciences (history, philology, sociology, etc.). Hence, the Orientalism and essentialism of Guénon's work (one should remember that he wrote in the interwar period) are not generally reproduced in their works. If Western esoteric Sufism reproduced rituals, doctrines, and structures of Western esotericism, these intellectuals chiefly conform to the Sufi order to which they belong.

These representatives of “erudite Sufism” are responsible for the majority of the translations of Sufi books from Arabic to Romance languages such as French, Spanish, and Italian, and for the dissemination of Sufi doctrines among the general public in Latin Europe. Among the most important and well-known Sufi intellectuals in this category, one can mention Michel Valsan (1907-1974), Charles André Gilis (1934-), Éric Geoffroy (1956-), Michel Chodkiewicz (1929-), Denis Gril, Claude Addas, Juan José González Rodríguez, Halim Herbert, Abdelmumin Aya, Abdelhaqq Belver, and Abdennur Prado. Although many Italian Sufis can be regarded as erudite exemplars, merging the Guénonian background with Islamic-Sufi references and social scientific discourse, they are not positioned as public advocates for Islam, unlike the case in France and Spain, where many of these Sufi intellectuals became public figures. This difference encourages further research, but based on a preliminary analysis we could propose that despite the stigma that Muslim intellectuals and converts to Islam, in particular, have to bear in all of Latin Europe, the French and Spanish contexts are less normative and constrictive. Another hypothesis is that these countries promote the presence of a public Islam—that may be either conservative or liberal—in order to contest Islamist narratives.

Transplanted Sufism

Marcia Hermansen (2004) uses the term “transplant” to identify Sufi orders in Western countries that reproduce the doctrines, rituals, and organisational structures of the country of origin. Examples of transplanted Sufi orders in Latin Europe are the Murīdiyya (Senegal), the Tijāniyya (Western Africa), and the Chishtiyya (Bangladesh), which are increasingly widespread among the immigrant population. These orders, mainly constituted of first- and second-generation migrants, are particularly difficult to study, since they are less visible in the public sphere and generally not interested in proselytism. Transplanted Sufi orders are quite homogenous from the ethnic point of view (Smith 2014), although they may occasionally attract

Sufi-inclined converts, and they seem rather impermeable to specifically European religious influences, such as Western esotericism, anti-modernism, and New Age culture. Furthermore, their composition and presence is strongly related to the migration process (Kane 2011).

The Murīdiyya, founded by the Senegalese Shaykh Aḥmadu Bamba (1853-1927) and derived from the Qādiriyya lineage, emphasises the importance of work and mutual protection among its members (Babou 2007). Functioning as a “chamber for acclimatisation” for newly arrived Senegalese migrants in Italy (Schmidt di Friedberg 2006, 205), the Sufi order functions as a welfare state, a network, and a cultural mediator between migrants and the surrounding “new” society. In fact, the *zāwiya* or *daira*, which in Wolof and Arabic means “circle”, is the main space of socialisation for its members (Bava 2000). The Murīdiyya also provides its followers with esoteric materials (talismans, medicines, etc.) and informal religious education. These functions are also exercised by other transplanted Sufi orders, each of which gathers migrants from a single ethnic group.

The Tijāniyya is one of the main transplanted orders in Latin Europe. This order was founded in Morocco by Aḥmad Tijani (1735-1815), and became prominent in sub-Saharan Africa (Triaud and Robinson 2003). Like other Sufi orders founded in the 18th century, the Tijāniyya stresses the idea of *sharī‘a wa ḥaqīqa*, a balance between Islamic law and mystical knowledge. In Europe, the Tijāniyya has two important branches: one called Tivaouane (from a city in Senegal) and the other *fayḍa*, which means “spiritual flow”. The former branch is the first of the two to have reached Latin Europe and is guided by the successors of Shaykh Mālīk Sy (1855-1922) and his son ‘Abdulazīz al-Dabbāgh Sy (1922-1957) (De Diego González 2019). It is characterised by a strong Wolof ethnic presence and by a discrete and sober approach to ecstatic rituals as well as a focus on ethics. The second branch stems from Ibrāhīm Niasse (1900-1975) and has a transnational and global diffusion (De Diego González 2019; Seesemann 2011). The transnational association Jama‘a al-Ansaroudine, which emerged from

this branch in the 1960s, organises events, inviting shaykhs from Senegal and Nigeria. The centres of the Fayḍa Tijāniyya are in Bergamo in Italy, Guissona in Spain, and Paris in France.

Similar to the other Sufi orders and currents analysed above, these religious movements are not static. In fact, recently some branches of these orders in Latin Europe have overcome the “status of transplanted” and opened towards the surrounding societies. For example, the Fayḍa Tijāniyya is attracting new disciples both among white converts and lifelong Muslims, thereby contributing to the production of Islamic knowledge, as has also been described by the term “Afropolitanism” (Al-Azami 2019). Furthermore, Shaykh Māḥy Cissé, grandson of Ibrahim Niasse and official *khalīfa* of Fayḍa Tijāniyya, is reaching new audiences thanks to Alfityanu Humanitarian International,⁸ a Tijāni NGO. Similarly, the Senegalese Murīdiyya has been welcoming new disciples owing to mixed marriages (Kane 2011). Further research is needed to explore this new trend, and to study under-researched Sufi orders such as the Chistiyya in Latin Europe.

Anti-Modern Sufism

Beginning in the 1970s, Islam in Latin Europe attracted people from conservative political backgrounds, as well as from the extreme right- and left-wings (Allievi 1999). Islam might represent for some of them the last bastion against modernity, socialism, secularisation, or capitalism. Catholicism, on the other hand, was perceived as more permeable to modernity, especially after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). In accordance with Guénon’s thought, very well-known both in conservative and extreme right milieus, Islamic Sufism could represent an esoteric dimension lost in mainstream Catholicism (Guénon 1924a).

Both anti-modern and Western esoteric forms of Sufism are based on the critique of modernity, the loss of religious and esoteric knowledge, and political and cultural decadence.

⁸ <http://alfityanu.org>. Accessed 14/01/2019

This commonality between the two types is evidenced by some shared activities.⁹ At the same time, there are important differences between these two forms of Western Sufism. First, from a doctrinal point of view, if in Western esoteric Sufism the main references are René Guénon and secondarily Frithjof Schuon, in anti-modern Sufism, Julius Evola (1898-1974)¹⁰ is a central figure. The differences between these thinkers and their corresponding schools of thought are significant and nuanced, especially regarding the relationship between paganism and monotheism, and race and religion. What is necessary to emphasise in this context is the contrast in their respective conceptualisation of political action. For Guénon political action concerns the sphere of the profane, with little relevance for spiritual matters, while for Evola political engagement and the spiritual quest cannot be separated (Hakl 2005; Sedgwick 2004). Second, in Latin Europe the Sufi orders influenced by Guénon's interpretations or shaped by his theories (what is defined here as Western esoteric Sufism) are not directly engaged in political activities, rather they are engaged in "metapolitics", such as proposing a specific interpretation of Islam and Sufism in the course of interfaith dialogue activities. Anti-modern Sufism, however, as explained below, developed a political dimension aimed at influencing the social and economic spheres and introducing some characteristics of extreme rightist narratives.

The Murabitun movement represents the most important anti-modern Sufi phenomenon in Latin Europe. It was founded in the United Kingdom at the end of the 1960s by Ian Dallas (1930-), also known as Abdalqadir as-Sufi, a former actor and playwright in the British counterculture (De Diego González 2020; Sedgwick 2016). Ian Dallas, like many spiritual seekers of the anti-modernist right-wing milieu, was looking for a religious and political system capable of facing the challenges of modernity: "[...] the presentation of True Religion had to be sound and unshakeable in its fundamental precepts. Tragically, for Europe, Catholicism was a

⁹ See for example the conference "Against the post-modern world" organized in Moscow in 2011. <http://www.4pt.su/en/content/against-post-modern-world-0> Last access 14/01/2019.

¹⁰ Julius Evola was an Italian philosopher, painter and poet and a key figure of both the Italian and European extreme right and the European esoteric and occultism milieu.

failed theology. It was this realisation which brought me as a beggar to the door of Islam”.¹¹ Islam, for Dallas, was embraced as the main instrument of liberation from an automated and highly technological modernity. According to this perspective, surrender to Islamic-Sufi divine knowledge (*ma'rifa*) allowed the transition to a new religious and political age (Dallas 1972; Sedgwick 2016). Dallas' conversion to Islam and Sufism, and his engagement in Morocco with the Darqāwiyya Sufi order, were narrated in his novel *The Book of Strangers* (Dallas 1972). The Murabitun movement came to stress the importance of Islamic orthodoxy, respect for the *sharī'a*, and in particular Mālikī *fiqh* (Sedgwick 2016) and opposition to Western modernity. This is confirmed by the name “Murabitun”, which evokes the religious-military movement which, during the Almoravid period (11th -12th centuries) was in charge of protecting the border fortresses. However, Dallas' scant knowledge of the Arabic language and the Islamic sciences suggest that rather than the revindication of Islamic orthodoxy, his agenda was more a matter of moral and political conservatism (De Diego González 2020).

It should be noted that some disciples of the Murabitun movement, and even Ian Dallas himself, considered the Guénonian concept of “primordial tradition” to be a form of heresy, far from (their interpretation of) Islamic orthodoxy. Yet, other Italian disciples, such as Claudio Mutti (1946-) in Italy, have a high estimation of the work of René Guénon.¹²

The Murabitun movement proposed an economic system based on the gold dinar, supposedly reproducing the currency system of the first Muslim caliphates. 'Umār Ibrāhīm Vadillo (b.1964) is a Spanish convert who led the Murabitun's economic project. With a background in Economics and Agricultural Engineering, he has been the main exponent of the remonetization of gold and silver against paper money. To do this, he developed a proposal based on the vision of the Mālikī *fiqh* and the main teachings of Dallas. He outlined his views

¹¹ <http://iandallas.org/pages/biography/a-new-beginning/> Last access 14/01/2019.

¹² <http://www.claudiomutti.com> Last access 14/05/2019.

and conclusions in the book *The Return of the Gold Dinar* (1996). His theoretical proposals have been appreciated in Universities of Southeast Asia (Indonesia and Malaysia) and Pakistan¹³. In 2002, with the support of the former Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir b. Muhammad, Vadillo tried to reintroduce the golden dinar in the Malaysian financial system¹⁴. Recently, he was involved in the creation of an Islamic gold-based cryptocurrency called *e-Dinar*¹⁵.

This currency system, the golden Dinar-based, according to Dallas and Vadillo, should entail a moral and political revolution, freeing the population from nationalism, communism, secularism, and capitalism (As-Sufi 2005; Vadillo 1996). In fact, “a virtuous and sacred kind of money for the members of the Murabitun order is key to a total social and existential transformation” (Bubandt 2009, 104).

The Murabitun critique is not limited to the economic and political dimensions, but also takes aim at the values of liberty, equality, and humanism: “[L]iberty’ is doomed to create slavery, ‘fraternity’ is doomed to forge enmity, and ‘equality’ is doomed to create an oligarchic financial elite” (Dallas, quoted in Bubandt 2009, 110). Similar to Western esoteric Sufism, the Murabitun movement is composed almost exclusively of white converts (Bubandt 2009) and its structure could be described through the ideal type of the “sect”, in the sense mentioned above (see section “Western Esoteric Sufism”).

In Spain, the Murabitun movement arrived in 1974, shortly before Franco’s death. Initially, the Murabitun attracted a few disciples among the Andalusian counterculture, but it was with Francisco Escudero’s conversion in 1978 that the movement widened its audience.

¹³ <https://islamhoy.com/la-corte-federal-de-la-sharia-pakistani-considerara-la-causa-contra-la-usura/> Last access 31/08/2019.

¹⁴ <https://www.oroyfinanzas.com/2010/09/umar-vadillo-un-espanol-que-persigue-la-remonetizacion-del-oro/> Last access 31/08/2019.

¹⁵ <https://umarvadillo.wordpress.com/2013/11/12/science-does-not-think/> Last access 31/08/2019.

Manşūr (Francisco) Escudero (1947-2010) studied medicine in Madrid and later he specialised in neuropsychiatry in Cordoba. He converted to Islam in 1979 after a visionary dream and joined the Murabitun Movement (De Diego González 2020). Escudero energised the community with the creation of the Sociedad para el Retorno del Islam en España (Society for the Return of Islam in Spain) and created a new community in Albaicín, Granada. He became the emir of this community in 1989 when he left the Murabitun after disagreements and pressure concerning matters of private life exercised by Dallas (De Diego González 2020). With other Spanish former disciples, he created Junta Islámica, now one of the oldest Spanish Sufi Muslim Communities.

The extreme right elements in the Murabitun movement are evident in the journal they edit in Spain, the *Handschar Revista de Historia y Pensamiento* (Handschar Journal of History and Thought), named after the Schutzstaffel (SS) Bosnian Muslim military formation, and in the intellectual work of the Italian Murabitun disciple Claudio Mutti, a key intellectual figure of the Italian extreme right (Tassinari 2008). Having said that, it would be incorrect to depict all the Murabitun disciples as “Nazi-Sufis,” and many of them are, in fact, merely anti-modernists. The movement has lived through several crises and fragmentations.¹⁶

In 2003 the Murabitun built the first mosque in Granada since the *Reconquista* in 1492. In 2013 Dallas retired as a shaykh and nominated the Moroccan Murtaḍā al-Būmashūlī as his successor. Starting in the 2010s the Murabitun movement entered a period of important changes, *characterisable both* as a process of Islamization, and a process of weakening of its European anti-modern and extreme right stances. This is proved by the new openness towards disciples coming from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and by the choice by Spanish

¹⁶ See for example Al-Italy (1994).

disciples to use the name Darqāwiyya, rather than Murabitun, thus rejecting the military dimension evoked by the former name.¹⁷

Fragmented Sufism

New Age culture, understood as the set of alternative narratives on religion, science, and culture (Hanegraaff 1998; Wilson 1992) has influenced Western Sufism in different ways. Above we mentioned how “de-Islamised Sufism” attempted to detach itself from traditional Sufi doctrines, practices, and organisational structures. In other cases, however, the distinction between “traditional orthodox” Sufism and New Age culture is not clear cut since there are some Sufi orders where Islamic “orthodoxy” coexists with New Age culture. This is the case of the Naqshbandiyya Ḥaqqāniyya in Latin Europe, which could be labelled as a “fragmented” Sufi order due to the coexistence of diverse and even opposed approaches to Sufism within a single movement.

Shaykh Nāẓim ‘Ādil al-Qubrusī al-Ḥaqqānī was born in 1922 in Larnaca, Cyprus. In 1940, he moved to Istanbul to study chemical engineering (Draper 2002). In 1945, he was initiated into the *ṭarīqa* Naqshbandiyya in Damascus by the Sufi master ‘Abdallāh al-Dāghastānī (1891-1973), who asked him to spread Sufi knowledge in Western countries (Kabbani 2004a). In 1973, Shaykh Nāẓim founded the Ḥaqqāniyya, the new branch of Naqshbandiyya. In the late 1970s, he began his journey to England, attracting many disciples of different ethnicities who organised themselves into various independent groups (Kabbani 2004b). Starting in the 1980s, Shaykh Nāẓim visited numerous Western countries such as the United States, France, Switzerland, and Germany, and some of his early speeches were published in the book *Mercy Oceans* (Ḥaqqānī 1984).¹⁸ One of the grounds for the

¹⁷ Observations about these changes are the result of unpublished fieldwork notes and personal communication (Antonio de Diego González) with Andrea Brigaglia.

¹⁸ For a global history of this Sufi order, see Nielsen, Draper, and Yemelianova (2006).

fragmentation of the Ḥaqqāniyya system is its strong emphasis on eschatology and the nearing of the Last Days. For many years Shaykh Nāẓim forecast the coming of the Mahdi and warned disciples to prepare for cataclysm, especially as the turn of the Millennium neared. This led to intense proselytising activities, which in turn resulted in quick conversions without real attention to the preparation of newcomers. Succession to Shaykh Nāẓim in the Naqshbandiyya Ḥaqqāniyya has been troublesome; the anglophone disciples follow the America-based leader Hisham al-Kabbani, while the continental European disciples follow Nāẓim 's son, Mehmet Adil.

The Naqshbandiyya takes different forms in France, Spain and Italy. In France, there are three *zāwiyas* (in Paris), and two of them do not exhibit the process of fragmentation described above, probably due to the high presence of lifelong Muslims among disciples and local leaders. Their local leaders foster a relatively liberal attitude toward gender segregation and *fiqh* interpretation, while they encourage their disciples to follow Sufi and Islamic practices (Piraino 2016b). These communities can be labeled as forms of “Engaged Sufism” (see below), due to their cultural and interfaith dialogue activities. On the other hand, Philippe De Vos, another Naqshbandi local leader, who has been very active in the production of books on Sufism (Vos 2005) can exemplify the influence of New Age culture on this Sufi order. Amongst his activities are workshops on the Enneagram¹⁹ and Sufi spirituality that are intended for non-Muslims and companies organising team-building activities (Piraino 2016b). In the Italian context, the Naqshbandiyya has been constituted by different groups in several regions since the 1990s. The core activities are seminars organised every two/three months by two German Sufi leaders, Shaykh Ḥassan Dyck and Shaykh Burhānuddīn Herrmann.

¹⁹ The enneagram is a symbol and spiritual exercise first known from the works of the exotericist Georges Ivanovič Gurdjieff and later claimed by some leaders of the Naqshbandiyya Ḥaqqāniyya (Sedgwick 2016).

Shaykh Burhānuddīn Herrmann (1962-) has organised many Sufi seminars in Italy, Spain, South America, India, and China. Three books in Italian have been published based on his speeches (Herrmann 2006). The focus of his seminars is on the sharing of emotions and how to reach happiness in everyday life. Herrmann teaches his disciples ways to find courage, peace, stability, and love; he could be described as a “spiritual trainer”, using the expression of one of his disciples. The Islamic message seems almost secondary. Shaykh Herrmann uses both psychological and psychoanalytic languages, as well as quantum mysticism in the manner of Fritjof Capra (1939-).²⁰ The influence of New Age culture and teachings is evident in his discourses: he talks about elves, extra-terrestrials, and vibrations from mother earth. The majority of Herrmann’s disciples live a custom-made Sufism, where Sufi practices are adapted to personal needs. Hence, the therapeutic dimension of religion becomes central in this Sufi order, to the detriment of the religious discourse.

Shaykh Ḥassan Dyck (1946-) is the most prominent Naqshbandi-Ḥaqqānī public figure in Europe. He is a talented musician who travels through Europe with his Sufi band “Caravan of Love”. He began to give Sufi seminars in Italy in the 2000s, when his mission was to guide the Italian Naqshbandiyya back onto the right path, after the “deviations” of Burhānuddīn. Nowadays his concerts go beyond the borders of the *ṭarīqa* and involve a wider public. If Shaykh Herrmann represents “the spirituality of performance” (Hervieu-Léger 2001, 102), where rituals, doctrines, and relations with disciples are malleable instruments in the hands of the “spiritual trainer”, Shaykh Dyck represents the “spirituality of the spectacle”. Shaykh Dyck says: “What is important for me is to reach the Divine Presence all together with the public”.²¹

In fact, Dyck’s Sufi concerts are not only instruments aimed at promoting the Naqshbandiyya, but they become a religious event: a sort of “*dhikr*-concert”, a fusion between

²⁰ Fritjof Capra is an Austrian-born American physicist and systems theorist. He became popular with a book exploring parallels between physics and Eastern mysticism (Capra 1975).

²¹ www.sufi.it, <http://www.sufi.it/eventi/Shaykh-Hassan-Scoiattolo-febbraio-2015.asp> Last access 7 June 2018.

a concert and a prayer based on the canonical rituals of Sufism (*dhikr*, *ḥaḍra*, *samāʿ*). The melodies come from the Arabic-Islamic heritage, but the influences of Indian,²² classical, and blues-rock music are clearly discernible. The words of these sacred “songs” come from famous Sufi poems (Ḥāfīz, and in particular Rūmī). The structures of the pieces are often improvised, adapted to the enthusiasm of the moment. The contents of his teachings are focused on “unlimited and unconditional love”²³ and the importance of fighting our own ego. Shaykh Dyck encourages disciples not to be afraid, to accept life and its highs and lows. Despite the unusual and spectacular form of his performances, as well as the speeches on universal love, the Islamic dimension in his teachings is still fundamental and he frequently quotes the Quran and the *ḥadīth*.

In Spain, Naqshbandi-Ḥaqqānī activities began in the 1990s and today the Spanish branch of the movement is led by Shaykh ‘Umār Margarit. The peculiarity of the Spanish context is not only the mingling of traditional Sufi elements with New Age aspects, but rather the emergence of Sufi rural communities as alternative ways of living in contemporary societies (Tarrés and Salguero 2010). Nowadays, the Naqshbandiyya enjoys much popularity within Sufism in the region. In addition to the community guided by Margarit in Orgiva (Granada), they have community centers in the main Spanish cities (Madrid, Barcelona, Seville) and in some rural areas such as Besalú (Girona) and Villanueva de la Vera (Cáceres).

The fragmentation described here is even more evident on the Internet, which allows many disciples and sympathisers to create their own virtual Sufism (Piraino 2016a). Recently, two young members of the Naqshbandiyya in Spain, Shihābuddīn (Rafael) Millán (1976-) and Marḍiyya (Marta) Herrero (1981-), have assumed an important online leadership. Through their

²² Dyck has performed with the New Delhi Symphony Orchestra and studied with Hindustani musician Vilayat Khan. Cf. <http://naqshbandi.sufi.it/tribute-to-Maulana-foto/shaikh-hassan/> Last access 7 April 2019.

²³ Fieldwork notes 2014.

YouTube channel “Psicología y Espiritualidad” (Psychology and Spirituality),²⁴ they are influencing public opinion within the Muslim community on social issues affecting contemporary society (such as motherhood, parenting, mental health, or social problems)—with great acceptance among Spanish-speaking Muslims in social networks. This fragmentation and oscillation between Islamic orthodoxy and New Age culture are present in many other Sufi orders in Latin Europe, such as in the case of the Jerrahiyya-Khalwatiyya, a group particularly widespread in Spain and Italy.

Engaged Sufism

Among the most important Sufi orders in Latin Europe are the Būdshīshiyya and the ‘Alāwiyya, originally based respectively in Morocco (Madagh) and Algeria (Mostaganem), but having a global diffusion (Dominguez-Diaz 2014; 2019; Piraino 2017; 2019c). These orders share many features, especially in Europe, where they are engaged in cultural activities promoting religious pluralism, knowledge of Islam and Sufism, encouraging democratic engagement, and opposing Islamophobia. This engagement is not only a reaction to the pressures of either Islamophobia or Islamism, but is also due to a specific interpretation of Islam, that can be called “inclusive universalism” (Piraino 2019c; 2019b). This inclusive interpretation, quite diffused especially among the European branches of these Sufi orders, has attracted people from diverse ethnic, cultural, social and economic backgrounds. These movements highlight the importance of religious pluralism as being an Islamic value, proposing the Andalusian period as a time in which Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived peacefully together.

In 1911, Aḥmad Ibn Muṣṭafā al-‘Alawī founded the ‘Alāwiyya in Mostaganem, Algeria. His charismatic aura attracted thousands of disciples from all over the Maghreb and Europe

²⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/user/ShihabMadrid/about> Last access 14/05/2019.

(Berque 1936). Following his death in 1934, the *ṭarīqa* was disbanded, giving rise to different independent branches. Shaykh ‘Adda, who led the main branch, developed its social dimension: he created a football team for young Algerians, reintegration programs for juvenile offenders, and founded schools to teach Arabic. Shaykh Maḥdī led the *ṭarīqa* during troubled years, namely the Algerian liberation struggle against the French and its aftermath. Since 1975, this *ṭarīqa* has been headed by Shaykh Khaled Bentounes (1949-), who lives in Southern France and is quite active in the francophone public sphere, through writing books and participating in conferences and television broadcasts.

Bentounes emphasises that no one possesses religious truth exclusively, rather everyone possesses only one part of it. This implies the redefinition of the concept of *kāfir* (infidel), who is no longer an unbeliever, atheist, or polytheist, or, in the most exclusivist interpretation, any non-Muslim (Piraino 2019c). Infidelity (*kufr*) thus becomes a state of mind, and the infidel the ungrateful person who does not recognise God’s grace. According to his perspective, Islam is a universal message of liberation from idolatry, a message of openness to the other. This does not imply a process of de-Islamisation. Bentounes’ books (Bentounes 1996) contain many Qur’anic quotations, and the ‘Alāwi disciples observe the main Islamic practices and rituals, although with a liberal attitude towards the *shari‘a*. This interpretation of religious truth implies a focus on the ethical and social dimension. Following Bentounes’ ideas, the Muslim is “the citizen par excellence” (Bentounes in Piraino 2019c). Hence, the shaykh advises his disciples to take part actively in political life. Furthermore, Islam and Sufism could indeed revivify contemporary democracies: “*Islam a un rendezvous avec la France*” [Islam has an appointment with France] says Khaled Bentounes, and he adds that, “Islam needs France, just as France needs Islam” (Bentounes in Piraino 2019c).

Various national and international networks originated from the ‘Alāwiyya. The main one is the NGO AISA—Association International Soufie Alawiya, which is recognised as

having a special consultative status by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. ‘Alāwi activities can be grouped under six categories: 1) transmission of Islamic and Sufi heritage; 2) fostering ecological awareness; 3) proposing an alternative management of power relations; 4) promoting active citizenship; 5) advancing women’s rights; and 6) encouraging interreligious and intercultural dialogue. The *ṭarīqa* also supports charitable projects, such as the creation of women’s cooperatives in Indonesia during the post-tsunami period. The most successful symbolic achievement of AISA and Shaykh Bentounes has been the acceptance of the 16th of May as the International Day of “Living Together in Peace” by the United Nations General Assembly (2017).

The Būdshīshīyya, originally from the small village of Madagh (Morocco), has become, since the beginning of the 2000s, one of the most visible Sufi orders, especially in the francophone world, counting tens of thousands of disciples and sympathisers (Dominguez-Diaz 2014). Shaykh Hamza al-Qādirī al-Būdshīshī, who led the Būdshīshīyya from 1972 to 2017, was considered by his disciples to be a “living saint”—the *qutb*, who “revolutionized the teaching of Sufism” (Ben Driss 2002, 142). Besides the popularity of Shaykh Hamza, the diffusion of this *ṭarīqa* has been possible thanks to his famous disciples including intellectuals, politicians, and artists. Shaykh Hamza’s charisma does not seem to be built on a discursive narration, since there are very few recordings of his speeches or published texts. His charisma is more based on non-verbal communication (Mouna and Hlaoua 2012). To use Weber’s category, Shaykh Hamza is not a routine Sufi master (Weber 1968), but the bearer of a divine presence. He spoke only Arabic, so the communication with his English- and French-speaking disciples was limited. This did not, however, prevent Europeans from joining the *ṭarīqa*. Shaykh Hamza is said to have implemented a “pedagogical turn” or a “spiritual reorientation” (Ben Driss 2002, 17) such that the *ṭarīqa* was said to move from the *jalāl* (majestic) path, characterised by asceticism and rigour, to the *jamāl* (beautiful) path, focusing on love and

mercy. This transition resulted in a relaxation of Sufi ascetic practices, however, without altering the Islamic nature of the *ṭarīqa*, which remains rooted in Mālikī jurisprudence. There are some narratives familiar among Moroccan and French Būdshīshi disciples, which describe this change as a “Sufism for everybody”. This openness also implies the formulation of an Islamic universalism, “*ni d’Orient ni d’Occident*” [neither of the East nor of the West (Q 24:35)] (Skali 2012, 109), that transcends cultural and ethnic borders.

The two main Parisian *zāwiyas* of Argenteuil and Bagnolet (two Parisian suburbs), through the associations Isthme²⁵ and the VSMF—Valeurs et Spiritualité Musulmane de France,²⁶ organise activities for young Muslims (such as Boy Scouts), interreligious dialogue and cultural events, seminars on Sufism, among others. Along with this commitment, other Būdshīshi disciples are engaged in a more visible manner. Examples are the socialist politician Bariza Khiari (Piraino 2019b) and the rapper Abd Al Malik (Joassin 2019), who both propose an inclusive and progressive Islam, sometimes attracting criticism from more conservative disciples, although this does not prevent them from being officially supported by the *ṭarīqa*.

There are other Sufi orders and Sufi intellectuals who could be classified under the category of “Engaged Sufism”. Examples are the Ni‘matullāhī order (J. Hammer 2006). In addition, the French Naqshbandiyya Ḥaqqāniyya, which is based in Paris and led by the *muqaddam* Abdelhafid Benchouk, can also be categorized under the category of “Public Sufism”, thanks to the Sufi Festival of Paris that he has organised since 2018. In this Sufi Festival, similar to the Sufi festivals organised in Fez (McGuinness 2012), liberal interpretations of Islam and Sufism are represented, stressing the importance of diversity and living together.

²⁵ <http://www.soufisme.org/2.0/personnalites/association-lishme-2/> Last access 14/01/2019.

²⁶ <http://vsmf.fr/vsmf-valeurs-et-spiritualite-musulmane-de-france/> Last access 14/01/2019.

Public Sufism

Beginning in the 1990s, Sufis in Latin Europe and North Africa started organising Sufi associations and networks in order to unite different orders and have a greater impact on the public sphere. The incubators of this “public Sufism” are the cultural events organized each year in Fez, such as the Festival de Musiques Sacrées du Monde, and later the Festival de Culture Soufie (McGuinness 2012). Nowadays, there are many Sufi cultural events in Morocco, France, and Belgium organised by different Sufi orders, focused on religious pluralism and proposing an open image of Islam in opposition to both Islamophobia and Islamism. Among the Sufi orders involved, the ‘Alāwiyya, Būdshīshiyya, Naqshbandiyya, and the Tijāniyya are the most prominent. In France, the main networks are the Festival du soufisme de Paris²⁷ and the Fondation Conscience Soufie.²⁸

Another distinctive feature of this “public Sufism”, especially in France, is the incorporation of artistic representation. For example, the plastic artist Rachid Koraichi²⁹—a Tijani disciple working in France, Algeria, Tunisia, and Spain—uses Sufi visual themes, narratives, poetries, and doctrines in his international exhibitions. Similarly, the artist collective *Dervish Spirit*³⁰ represents Sufism through performances, readings, and concerts in Sufi Festivals and exhibition venues. The main cultural networks in France of these Sufi aesthetic representations are the Institut de Cultures de l’islam (ICI – Paris)³¹ and the Institut du Monde Arabe.³²

In Spain a major example of public Sufism is the Neo-Andalusian movement created by former members of the Murabitun interested in the Andalusian Sufi heritage (De Diego

²⁷ <https://www.festivalsoufideparis.com> Last access 14/01/2019.

²⁸ <http://www.fondationconsciencessoufie.com> Last access 14/01/2019.

²⁹ <http://rachidkoraichi.com> Last access 14/05/2019.

³⁰ <https://www.institut-cultures-islam.org/agenda/dervish-spirit/> Last access 14/05/2019.

³¹ <https://www.institut-cultures-islam.org> Last access 14/05/2019.

³² <https://www.imarabe.org/fr> Last access 14/05/2019.

González 2020). This movement has a significant influence in southern Spain, especially in the cities of Cordoba, Granada, and Seville, and was organised around Maṣṣūr Escudero (1947-2010) and his organisation Junta Islámica. Escudero became the Secretary-General of the Islamic Commission of Spain and one of the most important public figures of Islam in Europe. After his break with the Murabitun, Escudero's public Sufism displayed a progressive political attitude and a strong focus on interreligious dialogue. The voice of this movement is the magazine *Verde Islam* and, later, the website webislam.com, which has had a notable influence on contemporary Spanish Islam (Cabrera 2015; Tarrés and Salguero 2010).

One of the most important peculiarities of the Neo-Andalusian movement has been the claim of a necessary de-Christianisation of Spanish Islam (González and Haya 2004), which, according to the authors of the abovementioned magazine and website (Abdelmumin Aya and Mohammed Abderrahman Maanan), was imbued by Orientalist and Christian interpretations and shortcomings. Their methodology combined philological analysis with the reading of traditional Sufi texts. The objective was to find the "true meaning" of the Muhammadan experience of "union with the divine beyond dogma, morals or asceticism" (Aya 2012, 40). This movement has been particularly important in Spain as evidenced by the books published by Escudero's disciples and advocates, who translated important theological works on Sufism into Spanish as well as writing for the general public (Aya 2012; Maanan 2006).

Conclusions

This chapter has explored major Sufi orders and trends present in Latin Europe, most of which also enjoy a global dimension (Piraino and Sedgwick 2019). There are of course less prominent Sufi activities which have not been covered, for example the Roma Sufi community in Florence (Speziale 2005) or the smaller Shi'a Sufi communities in Spain. We would like to stress some common trends among various categories of Sufism discussed above. Sufi orders

present in Latin Europe were often founded on peculiar interpretations of religion and society that have little to do with Islamic and Sufi traditions. The anti-modernism of the Murabitun, the Western esoteric blueprint of Guénonian Sufism, and the New Age culture of the Sufi Order International, are cultural and religious forms exogenous to Sufism and Islam that shaped the first Latin European Sufi orders and communities.

We described how these orders have gradually been living a process of “Islamisation” and “Sufisation”, in the sense that the traditional doctrines and practices are gaining more and more importance at the expense of the exogenous cultural and religious forms. This implies that many European Sufis are deepening their doctrinal and linguistic knowledge. A good example is the Burhaniyya Order present in Rome, which at the beginning of the 1980s drew Italian converts coming from Guénonian Traditionalism, and over the years has increasingly attracted transplanted Muslim migrants. One may see here a shift from Guénon’s philosophy to classical Sufi sources (Abenante 2016).

This process is probably due to the contact of these orders with new Muslim migrants, and to the emergence of new generations of European Muslims, who are more interested in the Islamic-ness or ‘authenticity’ of Sufi practice. Furthermore, beginning in the 2000s the “Sufi market” has been radically expanding. Nowadays there are extensive publications available in different languages, and all the major Sufi orders have websites and organize cultural activities.

The process of “Islamisation” and “Sufisation” has improved relations between European Sufis and Islamic communities in recent years. Furthermore, there are new Sufi communities emerging in Latin Europe in which Islamic education and orthodoxy are emphasised. In particular we refer to the disciples of the Syrian Shaykh Muḥammad al-Yaqūbī, one of the most important Sufi scholars travelling between Europe and the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region as well as the United States. These new groups in Italy and Spain are

growing in numbers and importance; further research is needed to investigate this novel phenomenon.

Another common trend among categories of Sufism in Latin Europe is the increasing openness of many Sufi orders to the surrounding (European) societies, which includes the acceptance of European convert disciples and the promotion of cultural and political activities. First with the ‘Alāwiyya in the 1990s and secondly the Būdshīshiyya in the 2010s and most recently the Tijāniyya, these Sufi orders have moved from close ethnically uniform networks of disciples to broader engagement with the European environment focused on “living together”. These orders are of fundamental importance in the relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. In fact, the Sufi message of Khaled Bentounes (‘Alāwiyya), Abd al-Mālik (Būdshīshiyya), Faouzi Skalli (Būdshīshiyya), like many others, is intended for multiple publics, both Sufis and non-Sufis, Muslims and non-Muslims. Hence, these orders, as we have shown, are currently responsible for the majority of interfaith dialogue activities. This openness also implies a certain cultural hybridity and also a vitality, wherein different languages narratives and forms of expression such as plastic arts, rap, theatre and music are dynamically combined.

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