be spilled onto the land, to paint it red and illuminate the sky at dawn and dusk, from east to west” (p. 92). It did not, though, often go as far as Arab salafi, and Iranian and other Shi‘i, texts that leave no possibility before the person being instructed save death, most notably as suicide bombers. It is true that one brief passage of the booklet did at one point fleetingly praise self-sacrificing “death units” formed by “our Muslim brothers” outside Patani, which it patterned from the wars of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) in Arabia (see, p. 131). The more Islamist stream of Patani secessionist nationalism could one day—perhaps soon—work to churn out extremists jihadists who seek death in their cause, but on the whole this booklet still more often rather inculcated that most of the fighters it primed to attack in early 2004 would themselves win and thus live. In the upshot, and in the spirit of their booklet, when the well-armed Thai forces mowed down too many of the “invincible” Muslims in the 28 April 2004 attacks, the survivors fled.

Berjihad di-Patani lacked the language and associations of Malay tasawwuf (Sufi mysticism) in so far as it did not image that there was any special leader (a saint or wali) with direct access to God: the union with God that it offers for the mujāhidūn, and especially the martyrs, is an undifferentiated one that the two writers derived only from a direct reading of the Qur‘ān, although some recent Jihadist publications may have contributed.

The academic and also the Arabo-Muslim communities of the world are in the debt of Gunaratna, Acharya and Chua for their outline of Patani nationalist groups, their clear overview of the structure of Patani society with its varied social, educational and political groups, and for the translation their book has offered of Waging Jihad in Patani. They have done their best to ascertain the facts and follow them where they led them: this is a largely academic study that does not strive to induct us into any paranoia which Singapore’s ruling minority supposedly sometimes voiced over decades towards neighbouring Muslim states and populations. Rohan Gunaratna has gone straight. Oh, why not bring him in? This way, Professor Gunaratna!


It is quite well known by now how much did 19th century German and German-writing orientalism differ from its British, French, and Dutch
versions in thoroughness and scholastic integrity. Cases in point, e.g., are Carl Brockelmann (1868–1956), Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921), August Müller (1836–1885), Thodor Nöldeke (1836–1930), Friedrich Rückert (1788–1866) and Gustav Weil (1808–1889). Edward Said’s critique, Orientalism does not do justice to this fact.


It is remarkable that many of these were women. Even more remarkable is perhaps the fact that three of the most productive of these authors on Islam were Catholic priests: van Ess, Gramlich, and Küng.

Gramlich (1925–2006), author of the book under review was a Jesuit arabist working from 1971 to 1987 as professor of religious history at the University of Freiburg in south-western Germany. In the course of his profound Islamic studies Gramlich specialized on Sufism, focusing in particular on Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) and Abū 'l-Futūḥ Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 520/1126), Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Rūmī (d. 672/1273), and ‘Umar b. Muḥammad al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234).

Consequently, much of his writing was devoted to Islamic mysticism: Die schiitischen Derwischorden Persiens (the Shi‘i Derwish Orders of Persia; 1965–1981); Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes (The Miracles of the Friends of God, 1987); Islamische Mystik (Islamic Mysticism — With Sufi Texts from Ten Centuries; 1992); Weltverzicht — Grundlagen und Weisen islamischer Askese (Renouncing the World — Foundations and Forms of Islamic Asceticism; 1997), and Der eine Gott (The One God; 1998) — the book under review. The work under review too is a tour de force of academic learning and devotion to detail. Indeed, together with 1302 footnotes the “academic apparatus” covers no less than 21% of the entire book. Only one author is significantly absent in text, index, and bibliography: Annemarie Schimmel. (What had the doyenne of German Sufi scholarship done to Father Gramlich to bring about her ostracisation?).

Gramlich displays his intimate knowledge of the recorded sayings attributed to more than 200 Sufis, including most prominently Muḥyī ’l-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Alī Ibn al-‘Arabī (d. 638/1240), Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, and

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Thus Gramlich deals less with the earlier, more sober Sufis — like al-Ḥasan ibn Yāsār al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) and Rābiʿah bint ʿIsaʾil al-ʿAdawīyyah (d. 185/801) — than with the later theosophic, if not gnostic “drunken” ones. Incidentally, only one modern time Sufi appears: ʿAbd al-Qādir b. Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Jazāʾirī (d. 1300/1883), the hero of the first Algerian war of independence (p. 348).

The author’s working method is evident. Obviously, he put all usable quotes on filing cards, arranged them by subject, and then wrote them out, one after the other, under appropriate headings like “Focusing on God,” “Thinking of God only,” “Targeting God,” “Fusion with God,” “Non-Being,” “Unbecoming,” and “Divinization.” In this way each page, on an average, is composed of seven quotations and five footnotes. This makes for very difficult reading but makes the work a marvellous archive of well organized quotable material.

As a minimum, mysticism is a way of life in which faith in God pervasively dominates all aspects of life. In this sense, all ardent believers from all religions, including of course the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him), qualify as mystics. The book is, however, mainly devoted to speculative mystics, i.e. people who aspire to a union with God, taking their radical interpretation of the doctrine of tawhīd (the existence of God excluding anything else), dead seriously.

This became problematic because as philosophically monists such Sufis risked sliding into pantheism (“everything is God”) or, perhaps worse, into their own identification with God (since everything is God). At any rate, such Sufis tried to realize two impossible aims: (i) to treat the world (and their own person) as not existing, as a mere illusion; (ii) to aspire desperately to a union with God that is categorically unattainable. They could have avoided much frustration had they only been able to follow Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Aḥad al-Sīrhindī’s (971–1034/1563–1625) later differentiation between wahdat al-wujūd and wahdat al-shuhūd — distinguishing between the ontological unity of all being and the mere human perception of it.

Elitist human beings can hardly be prevented from engaging in mystic endeavour. As Muslims, however, they ought to heed the advice of the Prophet (peace be on him) who strongly counselled against matters that have
become the core of philosophic, esoteric Sufism. In fact, unless one twists the Qur'anic verses considered pertaining to the issue, they can not be construed to mean that the world is non-existent, a mere illusion, nor as an emanation of God. Rather, the Qur'an teaches that the world, including humanity, is a divine creation — derived, conditioned, dependent, finite, yes, but — within these parameters — real. This is not contradictory to the belief in the One and Only God (tawhid) and the absence of any other reality besides Him (tafrid), respectively. Otherwise, the second part of the shabadah, referring to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) and his function, would be in clear violation of tawhid (p. 27).

Gramlich’s rich collection of citations lets one suspect that much of what the Sufis had to say about the Unsayable bordered on what Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) later termed “language games.” Many in their perplexity simply sought refuge in contradictions like. “I am sinning most when I recognize Him” or “A Sufi is a non-being in being and a being in non-being” or “Believing in one God means forgetting this belief ...” (p. 232).

Besides trying to pursue this to the point of absurdity, many Sufis also were curiously afraid of doing wrong unintentionally. Thus some proposed instead of saying the shabadah only to pronounce “Allah” — (i) because one might die after saying “la ilaha illa” and (ii) because it is meaningless to deny what clearly is impossible: divine plurality. Is seeing secondary causes not a form of polytheism? Does a mystic not become a polytheist when pointing to God because as a pointer he makes himself a second being next to God? Thanking God, morally rebuking oneself — is that not polytheism as well? (pp. 259–265).

Typically quite a few analytically inclined Sufis, including Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (pp. 23–27) and Ibn al-ʿArabī defined the stages through which Sufis must pass – from:

(i) a mere stating the oneness of God via
(ii) seizing the implication of this and
(iii) the vision of the One behind all plurality to
(iv) a total focus on God, culminating in
(v) becoming oblivious of oneself (al-fanāʿ fi-ʿl-tawhid).

At this point, as communicated in a famous hadith qudsi, Allah becomes the sight, hearing, tongue, hand and foot of the one whom He loves.

Yaḥyā al-Suhrawardī’s spiritual ascent is graded more esoterically, in favour of his “elites of the elites”:

(i) Denying the divinity of the non-divine;
(ii) Seeing only one, i.e. God’s, He-ness;
(iii) Seeing no you except God’s You;
(iv) Realizing that saying “You” denies God’s Oneness [the correct šabādah
supposedly being “There is no I except Myself”];
(v) Refraining from all descriptions of Reality since God alone can assert His
Uniqueness (p. 27).

Al-Shiblī put the failure of speculative human logic bluntly when stating
that:

Whoever defines God disdains Him; whoever points toward Him, is a dualist;
whoever speaks about Him is thoughtless; whoever claims being near to Him, is
far away; whoever believes to have found Him, has lost Him since human faith
never coincides with His reality (p. 31).

Al-Hallaj, too, excelled in formulating striking absurdities, saying: “The
servant in asserting the uniqueness of his Lord reaffirms his own self. And
who does so is a polytheist in hiding. Therefore no human being can assert
God’s uniqueness” (p. 36). With such a mindset it is not surprising that Aḥmad
al-Ghazālī even came to the conclusion that “One who does not learn his
monotheistic belief from Iblīs is a kāfīr,” because it was not due to Iblīs’ pride
but because of his strict monotheism that he had rebelled against God’s order
to bow before Adam (p. 37).

To many gnostic Sufis only God is able to say “God” since there is
nothing besides Him. He is both Lover and Beloved. Man’s attribute was
absolute non-being. It gives credit to Ibn al-‘Arabī that in his al-Futūḥat al-
Makkiyyah he maintained that the world’s non-being was relative in as much as
it was derived from God like the image in a mirror (pp. 83–100).

Thinking man, perplexed as he is bound to be, cannot escape such a
monistic view of Reality — if not ontologically (numerically) then at least
emotionally (conceptually). Hugo Ball (d. 1928), the irreligious founder of the
Dadaist Movement-irreligious at the time — in his book Flucht aus der Zeit
(Fleeing out of Time) gave evidence of this when, in 1915, he wrote: “It is an
error to believe in my presence. It takes great effort on my part to fool me
into believing in my real existence.”

Thinking man (abl al-baṣār) cannot stop searching the Truth, cannot stop
trying to understand Reality even though one cannot conclude from material
to non-material things. As Abū ‘Alī al-Daqqāq (d. 412/1021) put it: “Oh God!
Someone who really knows You is constantly searching for You, even though
he knows that he will never find You” (p. 111). Indeed, only after believing in
God will one recognize His signs as proofs of His existence. This is why Sufis
think so little of systematic theology (kalām) à la Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) and metaphysics à la Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). To prove God from His creation: Is that not a form of shirk?

Assessing the tremendous efforts made by the Sufis under Gramlich’s review one is bound to become as pessimistic as some of them. We can define God only in negative terms:

What He can not be (p. 118). Our highest knowledge is to know that we cannot know anything; all speculative thinking is vain and all subjective experience of the divine is uncommunicable (pp. 124 f.). Even the attributes of God revealed in the Qurʾān cannot be understood by us; we have to accept revelation bi lā kāyf (without asking how). God will remain unseizable for being too close and unseeable for being too bright (pp. 126–132).

Gramlich also shows how the Sufis had battled against the idea of human free will, limited or not: Since God’s knowledge is without a beginning, whatever happens in the world is merely a realization of His pre-knowledge. In addition, God’s acting is unmotivated and cannot be influenced, neither by faith and obedience nor by lack of faith and disobedience. Worse, nothing can cause God’s approval or disapproval since He is beyond need. Al-Ghazālī in particular was convinced that human action is totally controlled by God. Man is capable of wishing to do what He does, thus somehow appropriating His actions (kasb) — but even that under divine control (p. 206).

Clearly, this train of thought as displayed on pp. 54 ff. is disastrous for piety. [Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Musa al-Wāsīṭī (d. 331/942)] was therefore right in drawing the conclusion that in view of one’s predetermined fate it made no sense to pray (p. 60). After all, since we do nothing except through God we might as well remain as passive as a door that only moves with the wind (pp. 68, 75, 79). Interestingly, Ignatius of Loyola (d. 1566), founder of the Jesuit order, came to a similar conclusion when comparing the faithful to mere corpses moved by God. From this point of view one’s “I” is considered as an idol and the idea of human action as sheer polytheism (p. 71).

Gramlich gives, however, voice also to those Sufis who tried to accommodate a measure of free will and meaningfulness of behaviour: Rūmī taught that God does not approve of evil but allows it to happen — just as a medical doctor wishes to be able to heal without approving of disease (pp. 64 ff.). Better known are the efforts of Abūʾl-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Ismāʿīl al-Ashʿarī (260–324/874–936) to understand human action as created by God (Qurʾān 4: 78; 8: 17; 37: 96), but acquired by man (2: 286).

The concluding chapters of the book are devoted to perversions of mysticism caused by claims of union with God (jamʿ; ittiṣāl; wasḥ), arrogance,
pious fraud, and even cheeky impudence towards God as a result of too much (imagined) intimacy with Him. Thus Sufis were caught saying to God: “I have something that You do not have: You!” (p. 272). Others — even Rābi‘ah — are known to have reproached God and put pressure on Him to produce miracles in their favour (pp. 272–278).

The major fault of Sufis was, however, their claim of deification through identification with God, not only metaphorically. Al-Hallāj was not the only mystic who, through denying duality, saw no difference any longer between himself and God (pp. 279–339).

Incredible as it sounds, ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī wrote: “I am in reality God (al-‘aqq). But metaphorically..I am creature (al-khalq). I am a contingent being with respect to my form, but I cannot not be the necessary Being. It is the divine name al-‘aqq which belongs to me by original right (aṣl); the name of creature is only a borrowed name and a formula of differentiation (faṣl) (transl. Michel Chodkiewicz).

This recalls the anā ‘l-‘aqq — the formula used by al-Hallāj (and fatal for him) — much interpreted since, e.g. by Rūmī, Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Umar al-Rāzī (543–606/1149–1209) and Louis Massignon (La Passion de Husayn Ibn Mansur Hallaj). Of course, if the personality of a Sufi is “annihilated” in God, only God remains and only God can speak through him (pp. 350 ff.).

It is of course one thing to conceive of Reality monistically in a metaphysical sense and an entirely different thing to confuse “I” and “you” as a human being. When the Qur’ān says in 8: 17 “... you did not throw when you threw but Allah threw,” man and Allah are seen as two factors but only as one actor. In other words: huwa lā huwa. We have no other way to approach Reality than by reconciling logical contradictions, what scholastic philosophers called the coincidentia oppositorum.

No doubt that Gramlich has set a monument — and a monumental one at that — to the Sufi movement within Islam. The question is whether such a work is of relevance for the contemporary world, given that mysticism is not a major factor in the modern world. In fact, those who puzzle most about Reality nowadays are natural scientists. Indeed, Nobel prize winning mathematicians and physicists like Max Planck (1858–1947), Albert Einstein (1879–1955), and Werner Heisenberg (1901–1976) were the closest thing to contemporary mystics.

Today Sufism runs into an additional obstacle — modern linguistics. In the wake of Gottlob Frege’s (1848–1925) and Ludwig Wittgenstein’s modern semantics we are no longer as naïve as our Sufi ancestors were when verbalizing the unsayable. Today we quote from the Tractatus Logico-
Philosophicus, written by Ludwig Wittgenstein while he was a soldier on leave during World War I in 1918, and first published in German in 1921 as Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung:

“Not how the world is, is mystical, but that it is” (No. 6.44);
“Feeling the world as a limited whole is mystical” (No. 6.45); and
“What one cannot speak about, about that one should remain silent” (No. 7).

Murad Wilfried Hofmann


The study starts with stating certain facts about the movement of Muslim Brothers, considering it the first modern Islamic mass movement and the mother organization of all modern Islamist movements. The period 1928–1942 in the history of the movement is considered its formative phase. The author states that there is a gap in the historiography of the Muslim Brothers among Egyptian as well as Western historians of the movement (see pp. 1–2). He criticizes Richard Paul Mitchell’s study because of its negligence of this formative period before 1940 and concentrating mostly on the second half of the 1940s and the 1950s, and because it is lacking in its historical perspective (see p. 2).

With such criticism, the raison d’être of the present work is obvious. It tries to describe and explain the rise of the Society of Muslim Brothers from its founding in 1928 until the first repression of the movement in the autumn of 1941. The author also declares that a comprehensive analysis of all aspects of the Society’s ideology will not be given in his work since most of the essential writings by Hasan al-Bannā [Hasan b. Ahmad b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Bannā (1324–1368/1906–1946)] on the political and religious ideology of the

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