century; this means that a considerable part of the book is necessarily based mainly on secondary material, though the author took care to add some references to primary sources on many issues. It is obvious that he wanted to produce a comprehensive book on a major topic rather than analyze in depth a defined literary corpus. In the view of this reviewer, the latter approach would have been preferable and would have saved the author from some questionable assertions discussed above. Nevertheless, this is a valuable book; especially the parts on modern Naqshbandi developments are most welcome.

Yohanan Friedmann


An amazing feature of the present age is the recent conversion of a number of prominent western intellectuals to Islam. One of the most active and zealous of these is the retired German diplomat, Murad Wilfried Hofmann (born 1931). A participant in nearly every important Islamic conference, meeting and convention, he is also a prolific writer, the most regular contributor to the *Muslim World Book Review* (UK), besides being the author of several significant books. In the introduction, Khurshid Ahmad compares this diary in importance to Muhammad Asad’s *The Road to Mecca*. From a literary standpoint, there is no comparison between the two. The dignified majestic prose of *The Road to Mecca* contrasts with this diary’s highly colloquial idiom, at times degenerating into slang. Hofmann’s style is racy, as if he is always in a hurry, rushing here and there.

The diary is not so much on Hofmann’s life as it gives his views on a variety of issues directly affecting Islam/Muslims. Even this episodic, seemingly disjointed style can be legitimate in the case of a diary if the experiences and views related combine to form a coherent pattern as they do here.

If this diary fails to touch the heart, as *The Road to Mecca* does so powerfully, it may be because traditional Islamic civilization was so much more intact in 1922 than today and placed that much more fertile material at Asad’s disposal.
All Hofmann’s expressed views reveal him to be a diehard Wahhābī/Salafī, convinced beyond doubt that Sufism is a major factor in Muslim decline. Consequently, his sweeping rejection of Islamic philosophy. Sufism and artistic endeavour are at least a partial repudiation of mainstream Islamic civilization. This casual dismissal of some of the greatest personalities in the history of Islamic civilization (including al-Ashaʿarī, al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, Ibn Sinā, al-Ghazālī, Rūmī, Ibn Rushd, al-Ḥallāj and Ibn ʿArabi) in merely a few contemptuous phrases, is not painful for the ordinary Muslim reader.

Modernists often claim that the Qurʾān and the Sunnah are sufficient for them; but they must be interpreted, so who to follow? In the case of Hofmann, he takes Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduh, the pioneer of modernism in the Arab world, Muhammad Asad, Fathi ʿUthmān, andTurābī as his guides, convinced even of the superiority of the American convert, Jaffery Lang, over the giants of philosophy, theology and Sufism during Islam’s Golden Age.

Above all else, Hofmann is a modern man and not a traditional man. Notwithstanding his constant criticisms of contemporary western civilization, he feels thoroughly at home in today’s world.

However, that does not stop him from launching a most scathing attack against the catastrophic consequences of the godless Kemalist regimes in Turkey as his unforgettable description of his mother-in-law’s funeral in Istanbul at the conclusion of the book illustrates. When disrespect to the dead reaches such extremes as wearing jeans and gaudy T-shirts, standing around and joking and smoking, could it be that we Muslims have already sunk to the abyss of no return?

Maryam Jameelah


Probably many mothers or grandmothers and even fathers and grandfathers may be worrying how to tell their children or grandchildren about the basic facts of life from a truly Islamic point of view. And because they find it