

SUFISM IN LATIN AMERICA: A PRELIMINARY SURVEY

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Enviado: 15/05/2017

Aceptado: 18/09/2018

ISSN 2526-1096

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ABSTRACT:

Sufism, the Islamic tradition where the esoteric is most often found, has been present in Latin America since at least the 1920s, but has been studied very unevenly. This article provides a survey of what is known, and suggests priorities for future research. It covers the whole of Latin America but focuses on Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico, as these are the countries where there has historically been most activity, and where there is most activity today. It shows that all the varieties of Western Sufism that are known in Europe and the United States are also found in Latin America, mostly among Sufis who were born into Catholic families. Sufism, then, is an important part of the Latin American esoteric landscape. The article draws on work on Sufism outside Latin America and is based primarily on studies carried out in Latin America by Latin American scholars, supplemented occasionally by material from sources such as the internet. It is preparatory to the fieldwork that the author carried out after completing the article but before its publication. The article has been updated on the basis of that fieldwork only to remove obvious errors.

KEY WORDS: Sufism; Latin America; survey

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SUFISM IN LATIN AMERICA: A PRELIMINARY SURVEY

Sufism is esoteric in two ways. Firstly, in Europe and the USA, it has historically been part of the broader field of Western Esotericism. It made its first modern appearance in the West in connection with the Theosophical Society, and many groups remain connected to the esoteric milieu even today. Secondly, Sufism in the Muslim world is where interest in the *batin*, as the esoteric is called in Arabic, is concentrated. Sufism is often described as “Islamic mysticism” and is also sometimes described as “Islamic esotericism.” These descriptions, which also raise the interesting question of the relationship between esotericism and mysticism, are only partly right. Sufism, which has existed in the Muslim world for over a millennium, is indeed Islamic, though both theology and practice have sometimes diverged from the Islamic mainstream. Sufi theology and practice include the mystical and the esoteric, but they also include much that is neither mystical nor esoteric. Sufism is not mysticism or esotericism, then, and mysticism and esotericism are both also found in Islam outside Sufism, but anyone looking for mysticism or esotericism in Islam will normally end up with the Sufis. Over the last century, Sufism has become a destination for Westerners in Europe, the USA, and Latin America, as well as in the Muslim world. Some have also arrived at Sufism through spiritual searches, some through social networks or in other ways.

The dominant organizational form of Sufism in the Muslim world is the *tariqa*, literally “path,” often translated as “order,” led by a *shaykh*. The *tariqa* has no real equivalent in Christian terms, but the Catholic organization Opus Dei somewhat resembles a *tariqa*, as it is composed primarily of members who follow particular practices and form a fellowship, but otherwise live ordinary lives. The earliest Western Sufi groups did not follow the classic patterns of the *tariqa*, but the *tariqa* has since increasingly become the dominant organizational form for Sufism in the West, as in the Muslim world. Islam has no overall hierarchical structure similar to the Catholic Church, and so every *tariqa* is a fully independent organization, though modern states in the Muslim world do sometimes try to regulate them. *Tariqas* are named after the saints they ultimately derive from, so that the Naqshbandi *tariqa* (to take one of the most famous) is named after Baha al-Din Naqshband

(1318-89). Since the fifteenth century, the Naqshbandi *tariqa* has broken into numerous groups, all of which use the name Naqshbandi but which nevertheless operate entirely independently of each other. There are now multiple Naqshbandi *tariqas* in Latin America, sharing one name and point of historical reference, but otherwise having little or nothing to do with each other. Different branches of the same *tariqa* may thus take different positions on issues of theology, practice, and politics.

A *tariqa* in the Muslim world may have anything between twenty and two million followers, though *tariqas* with millions of followers are unusual, and always divided up into smaller groups in some way. Since personal contact between *shaykh* and follower is desirable, the typical *tariqa* probably has about fifty regular participants, and a few hundred further occasional followers. This is the case in Latin America. It means that no one *tariqa* is numerically significant, but that does not mean that Sufism itself is not significant. Worldwide, Sufism is one of humanity's major religious phenomena. Sufism, however, cannot be seen or studied in the abstract: it can only be seen and studied at the level of the *tariqa*. Hence the importance of studies of individual *tariqas*.

The purpose of this article is to provide a preliminary survey of Sufism in Latin America. This is a topic that has so far been covered somewhat unevenly, with some groups and *tariqas* having been relatively well studied, others simply having been referred to, and some not yet having been studied at all. This preliminary survey, then, will both summarize what is known and identify gaps, suggesting directions for future research. It focuses on organizations—on groups and *tariqas*—as the organizational framework of Sufism in Latin America is what is most visible, and is the key to understanding theology, practice, and significance.

There have been six major waves of Western Sufism in European and US settings, as shown in figure 1, a pattern that Sufism in Latin America broadly fits, but with some interesting differences, as this article will show.

Figure 1: The waves of Western Sufism

Wave	Period	Characteristic
1	From 17 th century	Texts
2	Interwar	Universalist
3	1960s	New Age
4	1960s/2000s	Ethnic
5	1980s	Islamization
6	2000s	Neo-traditional

The first wave was purely intellectual, from about 1671, when the first Sufi text ever translated into a Western language became available (SEDGWICK, 2016: 95-96). It resulted initially from the spread of printing in vernacular languages, then from the Enlightenment, and finally from increased contact between Europe and the Muslim world. It continues today with the wide popularity of the works of the Sufi poet Rumi. During this first wave, Westerners drew on Sufi thought for theological purposes and on Sufi poetry for its literary and inspirational qualities. The first wave is not especially visible in Latin America.

The second wave started just before the First World War and flourished in the interwar period, and was the wave during which first Western Sufi groups were established; Sufism was generally understood in universalist and perennialist terms, as the (esoteric) essence of all religions. In Europe and the USA, it was driven by the widely disruptive consequences of the First World War. The second wave in Latin America seems to have been a reflection of this.

The third wave grew out of the second wave during the 1960s, producing what some have seen as “New Age” Sufism. It was connected with the hippy movement, which was less widespread in Latin America than in the USA and Europe. Even so, the third wave spread in Latin America, and some Latin American groups were producers of third-wave Sufism in their own right.

A simultaneous fourth wave, which started in the 1960s but did not really become visible until the 2000s, was made up of “ethnic” Sufi groups of immigrant origin. As this

derived from Muslim migration patterns, it impacted first Western Europe, and then the USA. It has had limited impact in Latin America.

The fifth wave, which started during the 1980s, represented the partial Islamization of Western Sufism at the hands of a number of “traveling *shaykhs*” from the Muslim world. Its causes remain unclear, but included the lower cost and greater ease of intercontinental travel. Some fifth-wave groups reached Latin America via the USA or Europe, but some also reached Latin America directly.

A sixth wave is now emerging, made up of scholars and preachers promoting what they call “traditional Islam” but are in fact modern in various ways, for which reason they may be termed “Neo-traditionalists.” It is in many ways a reaction against political Islam and the violence that has beset the Arab world since 9/11. The Neo-traditionalists are not always explicitly Sufi, but draw on Sufism for much of their teachings, and are supported by several governments in the Arab world and the West as representatives of “moderate Islam,” given that they are fierce critics of Jihadism and the Muslim Brothers. One website, “Iqara Islam: Sua fonte de Islam Tradicional” (your source for traditional Islam), publishes Portuguese translations of their writings (iqaraislam.com). It is not clear who maintains this website, however, and it is possible that it is based in Portugal rather than Brazil. There are at present no other signs of the sixth wave in Latin America, which has so far mostly escaped the conflicts and violence that have afflicted other regions. This article will therefore not return to it.

This article will now review the impact in Latin America of the first five of these six waves.

The first wave in Latin America

I do not know of any study of the impact in Latin America of the first wave of Western Sufism, during which Westerners drew on Sufi thought for theological purposes and on Sufi poetry for its literary and inspirational qualities. The relevant texts, however, were presumably available and read in Spanish, Portuguese and French editions that were imported from Europe. One very popular poetic text, however, was published in Latin America. This was the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam*, an English work based loosely on

Persian originals, which was published in Spanish in Mexico City in 1904 (DUBLAN, 1904) and then again in part in Buenos Aires in 1924, re-translated in the avant-garde journal *Proa* by Jorge Guillermo Borges (1874-1938) (BORGES, 1924), the father of Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986). Jorge Luis Borges himself published an article about the *Rubáiyát* in 1925 (BORGES, 1925). That a literary figure should be interested in a best-selling work such as the *Rubáiyát* is not surprising. It is the first of a number of connections between Sufism and Latin American literature.

As we will see, two of the countries in Latin America in which there has been most Western Sufism are Argentina and Brazil. This pattern became established with the Latin American publication of the *Rubáiyát*, as the second country involved was Brazil, where a Portuguese translation of the *Rubáiyát* was published (in Rio de Janeiro) in 1938 (TARQUÍNIO DE SOUSA, 1938). Earlier translations published in Lisbon had presumably been available before this: the first Brazilian printing of a text such as this indicates the popularity of the text, not its availability.

All these dates indicate a significant delay in transmission and reception of the *Rubáiyát*, as the first US edition was published in 1878, and the height of its popularity in the English-speaking world was in the 1890s (SEDGWICK, *op. cit.*: 121-25). Such a delay is typical of relations between periphery and center. For subsequent waves of Western Sufism, however, there was little or no such delay.

The second wave in Latin America

The second wave of Western Sufism was small, consisting of three groups that flourished in Europe during the interwar period, all of which combined Sufism with perennialism and other ingredients. All of these were based in Europe and quickly became established in Latin America, where they remain active today, as figure 2 shows. Research, however, is patchy, and more remains to be done.

Figure 2: The second wave in Latin America

Group	Based in	Established in	Now found in
Sufi Movement	Paris	Brazil, Argentina	Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador
Guénsonian Traditionalists and Maryamiyya	Paris, then Indiana, USA	Argentina, (Brazil)	(Argentina), Brazil, (Mexico)
Gurdjieffian Sufis	Paris	Chile	Dominican Republic

The Sufi Movement of Inayat Khan

The most public group in the second wave was the “Sufi Order” or “Sufi Movement” of Inayat Khan (1882-1927), an Indian who moved to London at the start of the First World War after traveling in the USA and in Russia. During the interwar period, with assistance from British members of the Theosophical Society and from wealthy supporters in the Netherlands, he and his close followers established a worldwide movement that became ever more universalistic, stressing Sufism not as Islamic but as the essence of all religions. This perennialist understanding of Sufism owed something to the Theosophical Society, but was also a consequence of Western understandings of Sufism that had developed during the first wave (*Ibidem*, pp. 156-69).

The Sufi Movement became established in Argentina and Brazil during the 1920s, at about the same times that it was being established in Europe and the USA. There is a report of Ada “Rabia” Martin (1871-1947), Inayat Khan’s first American follower, “continu[ing] her work in... Brazil” (DUCE, 1961: 34), but no traces of a Brazilian group deriving from her has been found. The Sufi Order in Brazil that lasted was instead established by an English businessman, Cecil “Shabaz” Best (1882-1972), who had previously been a member of the Theosophical Society in England, where he had served as Syllabus Secretary. Best moved to Rio de Janeiro in about 1922, and established the first branch of the Sufi Movement there (Shelquist, NDa). It is not known to what extent he built

on the local Theosophical Society. It was presumably this branch that was responsible for the earliest translations of Inayat Khan's works into Portuguese, seven of which were published between 1940 and 1942, all translated by an unidentified João Cabral (probably not the poet) and published in Rio de Janeiro. Best retired from Brazil to his native England in 1952 (Shelquist, NDa). The Sufi Movement in Brazil then continued under Nuria Gosende, who was still active during the 1990s, and possibly others (BARBIN, 2018). In 2017, its Facebook page had some 600 followers (facebook.com/movimentosufinobrasil).

An Argentinian section of the Sufi Movement was established in 1924 by R. A. L. "Mumtaz" Armstrong (born 1892), an Englishman from a wealthy background—he was educated at St. Paul's, a leading "public" (private) school, and Oxford. Armstrong was appointed "National Representative for South America" in 1925 (Shelquist, NDb), but does not seem to have actually lived in Argentina, as he had other positions in the Sufi Movement in Europe, and in 1926 married a Dutch follower of Inayat Khan in Geneva (Shelquist, NDb), which suggests that he was a permanent part of Inayat Khan's inner circle. No traces of Armstrong's Sufi Movement in Argentina have been identified.

Further sections of the Sufi Movement were later established in Colombia and Ecuador, where they are still active today. In Bogotá, "Amin" Betancur's section has a publisher, Sofía Editores, that publishes Spanish translations of the works of Inayat Khan, and has 3,000 followers on its Facebook page (facebook.com/sofiaeditores), a remarkable number. In Cuenca, the section of "Inam" Rodrigo Ando organized the 2016 and 2018 "Pan-Latin Sufi retreats" (facebook.com/suficuenca), and has 199 followers on Facebook (the 2017 pan-Latin retreat was in Colombia). Both sections work with Nawab Pasnak, the American Sufi who in 2016 became one of the two joint leaders of the worldwide Sufi Movement (VAN DER GRAAFF AND LENNINGS, 2017), replacing a joint leadership that had grown old in office—one of the former joint leaders, a Dutch politician who had been Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund during the 1970s, was by then 95 years old. In an interview in 2012, Pasnak identified Spain and Latin America as the main growth areas of the Sufi Movement (interview with the author, Katwijk, Netherlands), and in 2016 both Betancur and Ando were appointed to senior positions in the international leadership of the Sufi Movement (VAN DER GRAAFF AND LENNINGS, 2017),

evidently as part of a plan to restore dynamism to what had become, in Europe, a conservative and ageing group. This represented something of a reverse take-over of the European center by the Latin American periphery. The Sufi Movement, then, deserves further research.

The Guénorian Traditionalists

The least public group was the Traditionalist movement that grew around the work of René Guénon (1886-1951), a French philosopher who emerged from the prewar esoteric milieu to write some of the most influential perennialist texts of the century. Followers of Guénon's work range from the historian of religions Mircea Eliade (1907-86) to the US political activist Steve Bannon (born 1953). Guénon himself became a Sufi, and the most important expression of his ideas was a secret Sufi order known as the Maryamiyya, but not all Guénorian Traditionalists are Sufis (SEDGWICK, 2004). Guénorian Traditionalism is not in itself Sufi, but instead provides the intellectual basis of one of the most important strands of Western Sufism. It also provides one of the classic and most influential understandings of Sufism as esotericism.

The work of Guénon came to the attention of a group Catholic intellectuals in Argentina almost immediately during the 1920s (SIGWEED [SEDGWICK], 2015: 238-240). One of these, Rodolfo Martínez Espinosa, entered into a brief correspondence with Guénon, who attempted to correct what he saw as Martínez's excessive concern with exoteric religion as opposed to metaphysics (GUÉNON, 1934). Martínez appreciated Guénon, but remained determinedly Catholic. A Spanish translation of one of Guénon's key works *Introduction générale a l'étude des doctrine hindoues* (1921, *Introduction to the Study of the Hindu doctrines*) was published in Buenos Aires in 1945 (as *Introducción general al estudio de las doctrinas hindúes*), and one of Guénon's appreciative readers was the Argentinian novelist Leopoldo Marechal (1900-70) (Coulson 1974; Cheadle 2000). Marechal's masterwork *Adán Buenosayres* (1948) reflects Guénorian Traditionalist themes. Some further translations of Guénon's work were also published in Argentina in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

In 1968, Argentinian Traditionalism began to move away from strict Catholicism when Professor Armando Asti Vera (1914-72), a Guénonian Traditionalist who was chair of the department of philosophy at the University of Buenos Aires, established a Sección de Estudios de Filosofía Oriental (Section for the Study of Oriental Philosophy). Islamic thought was taught by Osvaldo Machado Mouret, a former Argentinian ambassador to Cairo who had met Guénon there (DEVALLE, 1973: 310; SIGWEED [SEDGWICK], *op. cit.*:241-42). So far as is known, however, this group never went beyond the academic study of Islam, and—once again—no Sufi group was established. The leading Argentinian Guénonian Traditionalist scholar of the following generation, Francisco García Bazán (born 1940) was more interested in Gnosticism and Neoplatonism—neither of which had much interested Guénon—than in Sufism (PACHECO, 2015). Once again, Argentinian Traditionalism remained within the Christian tradition, if not specifically the Catholic one.

Nothing is yet known about the early reception of Guénon in Brazil, but there must have been some reception, as a Portuguese translation of another key work of Guénon's *La Crise du monde moderne* (1927, *The Crisis of the Modern World*) was published in São Paulo in 1948 (as *A crise do mundo moderno*). The Brazilian philosopher and public intellectual Olavo de Carvalho (born 1947) is known to be associated with Guénonian Traditionalism, but is not a Sufi. A branch of the Maryamiyya was established in Brazil (ALVES DA SILVA FILHO, 2012: 112), and remains active today, but there are no details.

There was also a branch of the Maryamiyya in Mexico at one point, as a Fundación de Estudios Tradicionales (Foundation for Traditional Studies) existed in León, Guanajuato, and in 2007 published a translation of *What is Sufism?* (1975) by Martin “Abu Bakr” Lings, a leading English Maryami (as *¿Qué es el Sufismo?*).

There is almost no research on Guénonian Traditionalism in Latin America outside Argentina, and research on Brazil is especially needed. There may also be branches of the Maryamiyya elsewhere. It should be noted, however, that the Maryamiyya has not historically been enthusiastic about research by outsiders.

The Gurdjieff movement

The most varied group in the second wave of Western Sufism was the Gurdjieff movement. George Gurdjieff (died 1949) was a Greek-Armenian spiritual guide who was discovered and promoted by Peter D. Ouspensky (1878-1947), a Russian journalist and leading member of the Russian Theosophical Society who left Russia with Gurdjieff after the Russian Revolution. Gurdjieff never described himself as a Sufi, but he did refer to teachings he had received from Sufis, which later led some of his followers to consider themselves Sufis or even to become Sufis. The most notable of these was an Englishman, John G. Bennett (1897-1974), a close follower of whom, Pierre Elliot (1914-2005), later moved to the USA (SEDGWICK, *op. cit.*: 176-83).

The history of the Gurdjieff movement in Latin America has been partly researched. It is known, for example, that a British follower of Ouspensky, Rodney Collin, founded a Gurdjieff community near Mexico City in 1948, from where the Gurdjieff movement spread to Peru, Chile, Uruguay and Argentina (PETSCHÉ, 2013: 16-17). The full history and extent of the Gurdjieff movement in Latin America, however, remains to be studied.

A combination of Gurdjieff and Sufism was made by a Chilean psychologist, Claudio Naranjo (born 1932). Nothing is currently known about Naranjo's early milieu. What is known is that he developed the Enneagram, an approach to personality typing originally conceived by Óscar Ichazo (born 1931), a Bolivian, who also drew on Gurdjieff, into a major global practice. In the process Naranjo moved from Chile to the US, and also moved away from Sufism (Sedgwick, Forthcoming A). Naranjo's Chilean background deserves further study, as does the whole Enneagram phenomenon, which may well be one of Latin America's most successful cultural exports during the second part of the twentieth century.

A similar group in the Dominican Republic, the Gurdjieff Dominican Group directed by José Reyes (born 1942), retains an occasional emphasis on Sufism. Reyes spent time with Elliot, the follower of Bennett, the most Sufi of Gurdjieff's own followers, at Claymont, West Virginia, USA, during the late 1970s, and Elliot visited him in the Dominican Republic. Occasional *dhikr* ceremonies have been held at Reyes's center. It is, however, a primarily Gurdjieffian group (Sedgwick, Forthcoming A).

The third wave in Latin America

The third, “New Age,” wave of Western Sufism was dominated in Europe and the US by groups deriving in one way or another from the Inayati Sufi Movement, but was started by Idries Shah (1924-96), a talented writer who seems to have drawn partly on the Gurdjieff tradition, though the details of his connection with the Gurdjieffian remain unclear, as there are no sources for the relevant part of his early life. Shah was the Sufi equivalent of the even more widely read Carlos Castaneda (1925-98). He was influential on two major English literary figures, Robert Graves (1895-1985) and Doris Lessing (1919-2013) (SEDGWICK, *op. cit.*: 209-19), and on one Brazilian literary figure, the world-best-selling novelist Paulo Coelho (born 1947) (SEDGWICK, 2009: 189-90). Shah was read in Latin America as he was read elsewhere. What was unique to Latin America (and Spain) was that his brother, Omar Ali-Shah (1922-2005), established a following there.

The term “New Age” is problematic, as it really indicates a historical period but has been taken to denote a type of spirituality; in fact, there was more than one type. It is also problematic because many of the ideas and practices that became popular during the New Age were not new at all; many derived from the Theosophical Society, for example, and many of those had even older roots. The third wave of Western Sufism may be described as “New Age,” however, on chronological grounds, and also because it appealed to the demographic that made both the Hippy movement and the New Age. During the third wave, Western Sufis lived in communes, and forms of Islamic dress were sometimes an alternative to the more traditional bell-bottoms, tie-dyes, headbands and beaded necklaces. Three such groups became established in Latin America, where they remain active today, in addition to Ali-Shah’s group, as figure 3 shows.

Figure 3: The third wave in Latin America

Group	Based in	Established in	Now found in
Omar Ali-Shah	Spain and Latin America	Mexico, Uruguay, Brazil, Argentina	Mexico, Uruguay
Ibn Arabi Society	UK	Mexico, Brazil	Mexico, Brazil
Inayatian dances	USA	Argentina, Chile	Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela
Murabitun	UK, then South Africa	Mexico	Mexico

The Naqshbandiyya of Omar Ali-Shah

Although Idries Shah had a small circle of (often well-placed) admirers, he never formed a real group of followers, saying that he could not do this and write at the same time, and criticizing “gurus” in general (SEDGWICK, *op. cit.*:217). His brother Omar Ali-Shah, however, did form a group of followers. Ali-Shah was initially based in Paris (*Ibidem*, p. 211), but spoke Spanish, and accumulated followers mostly in Spain and Latin America. Contemporary groups deriving from Ali-Shah have been identified in Mexico City (facebook.com/pg/Sufismo-Naqshbandi-Mexico-188056868006737), and in Montevideo, Uruguay (MONICA C, 2009). The Mexican groups self-identify as a branch of the Naqshbandiyya, and acknowledge the leadership of Omar’s son Arif Ali-Shah. The Uruguayan group self-identifies as the Instituto JABÍ. There was also a group following Ali-Shah in Rio de Janeiro, as a publisher there, “Dervish,” was then publishing Sufi works by Ali-Shah and some other authors in Portuguese, and in Buenos Aires, where “Dervish International” was also publishing during the same period.

None of these groups have been studied. They are especially interesting as they are specifically Latin American and Spanish.

Inayati groups

A number of groups deriving in one way or another from the Inayati Sufi Movement initially formed parts of a milieu more than distinct organizations. The key figures in this milieu were Inayat Khan's son Vilayat Inayat Khan (1916-2004), Sam Lewis (1896-1971) of San Francisco, and Bülent Rauf (1911-87), an exiled member of the Egyptian royal family living in England. Both Vilayat Inayat Khan and Bülent Rauf ran what were in fact Sufi communes, one in the USA and the other in the UK (*Ibidem*, pp: 231-32, 240-43). The followers of Bülent Rauf also established the Ibn Arabi Society, a group which straddles academia and universalist mystical esotericism. It now has three main sections, one in the UK (where it started), one in the US, and one "Latin"—MIAS Latina, Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society Latina. This is based in Spain, but has sections in Mexico and Brazil (ibnarabisociety.es).

There are no signs of any Latin American groups deriving directly from Vilayat Inayat Khan, whose books were not translated into either Spanish or Portuguese (until one single book was published in Spanish in Madrid in 2010). An Argentinian who had moved to the US, Hugo "Yakzan" Valdez (1937-93), was part of the wider milieu that Vilayat Inayat Khan was part of, however, and during the late 1970s visited Argentina and Chile, and taught a new practice developed by Sam Lewis, the Dances of Universal Peace ("Yakzan," ND). These dances, typical of the Hippy era more than the New Age but still drawing on Sufi ritual, are still performed in Argentina and, especially, Chile, and also in Mexico, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela, where they probably arrived by a different route. It seems likely that, like Dances performed elsewhere, they attract a regular participation of around thirty people, with more attending annual dance festivals. If they follow the pattern noted in Europe and the USA, the emphasis will now be on generic spirituality rather than on Sufism, with most dancers knowing little or nothing about Sufism and Islam. The Latin American Dances of Universal Peace, then, might be an interesting topic for research, but are not directly related to the larger question of Sufism in Latin America.

The Murabitun

One highly unusual group that belongs to the New Age chronologically and fits with the Hippy movement in terms of some of its practices, but does not fit at all with the general understanding of New Age spirituality, was the Murabitun. Strictly speaking, the Murabitun were a revolutionary political movement, not a *tariqa*, and the *tariqa* was a branch of the Darqawiyya. In practice, however nearly all members of the *tariqa* were also members of the Murabitun, and the term “Murabitun” has been widely used to describe the *tariqa*. This article will follow this practice.

The Murabitun were unusual in being a revolutionary political movement, and also in emphasizing the strict observance of all aspects of regular Islamic practice, not just of Sufi practice. The strict observance of regular Islamic practice is the norm among Sufis in the Muslim world, but had until then been very much the exception in the West.

The Darqawiya, the *tariqa* at the heart of the Murabitun, was established in London in 1972 by a fashionable media figure, Ian “Abdalqadir” Dallas (born 1930), and set up what was in effect a commune. Early followers included a number of pop musicians (*Ibidem*, pp. 239-40). In 1981, they adopted a political plan of establishing *ribats* or armed colonies to prepare the way for an Islamic revolution—“Murabitun” literally means those who dwell in a *ribat*. The main *ribats* were in Norwich, England, Cape Town, South Africa, and Granada, Spain—Granada being especially important as it had previously been the capital of the Muslim kingdom of Gharnata. Military training was envisaged as the counterpart of spiritual training (*Ibidem*, pp. 2016: 243-46). That these activities did not attract the attention of Western intelligence agencies seems incomprehensible in the post 9/11 age, but in the 1980s groups of English and Spanish Sufis publicly preparing for jihad evidently seemed more of a curiosity than a threat. In the event, the *ribats* developed into religious rather than revolutionary communities, and military training was forgotten, so far as is known. There is no evidence that the Murabitun ever acquired arms. They became known instead for the depth and quality if their Islamic scholarship. However, the 1994 Zapatista uprising in the Mexican state of Chiapas still attracted the attention of a Spanish Murabit, a self-described former Marxist, Aureliano “Mohammed Nafia” Pérez Yruela (PASTOR DE MARIA Y CAMPOS, 2015: 145). Pérez set out to meet the Zapatista leader,

Subcomandante Marcos (Rafael Guillén Vicente, born 1957), presumably to convert him from Maoist revolution to Islam, or perhaps even Islamic revolution.

Pérez failed to convert the Zapatistas. He did, however, succeed in converting several hundred local Mayans, mostly from the Tzotzil and Tzeltal ethnic groups, and in establishing a *ribat* in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas (ZERAOUI, 2011: 356). This subsequently split into two groups, the original *ribat* and an independent, non-Murabit (but still Muslim) community (*Ibidem*, pp. 356). The sudden and apparently astonishing appearance of a Sufi Muslim community in Chiapas is without doubt the best known and best researched event in the history of Latin American Sufism (LARA KLAHR, 2002; VITE PÉREZ, 2005; CAÑAS CUEVAS, 2006; CAÑAS CUEVAS, 2012). It even rated a picture-story in the *National Geographic* (STROCHLIC, 2017). It reflects, however, circumstances specific to Chiapas. Just as the Murabitun are unique in the history of Western Sufism, so the Sufis of San Cristóbal de las Casas are unique in the history of Latin American Sufism.

The fourth wave in Latin America

The fourth wave of Western Sufism was made up of “ethnic” Sufi groups of immigrant origin, and was a consequence of migration from the Muslim world to the West, which started in the 1960s. There has been less Muslim migration to Latin America than to Europe, but there has still been enough to give rise to one substantial “ethnic” Sufi group, the Yashrutiyya in São Paulo, which was first established by immigrants from southern Lebanon in the 1960s (ALVES DA SILVA FILHO, *op. cit.*: 111). This now has some 500 members, and is very much a community group as well as a Sufi *tariqa*. It conducts its meetings in Arabic rather than Portuguese, has a football pitch and a *churrasqueira* barbecue site as well as a mosque, and makes no effort to attract outsiders (*Ibidem*, pp. 116-22). Elsewhere, fourth-wave groups have sometimes been influenced by third-wave and fifth-wave groups, but this has not happened in the case of the Yashrutiyya.

There are probably other fourth-wave groups in Latin America that have not yet been identified. Paulo Pinto reports Mouride and Tijani groups among African migrants in Brazil, for example (PINTO, 2015: 110), and Silvia Montenegro reports up to 10,000

Mourides in Argentina (MONTENEGRO, 2018: 27). No detailed work has yet been done on these, however. It may be appropriate to wait a little until these groups are better established before starting to research them.

The fifth wave in Latin America

As has been said, the fifth wave of Western Sufism, starting mostly during the 1980s, represented the partial Islamization of Western Sufism at the hands of a number of “traveling *shaykhs*” from the Muslim world. Both Islamic practice and Islamic identities increased and consolidated. Four important “traveling *shaykhs*” have been identified (SEDGWICK, Forthcoming B). The earliest was Bawa Muhaiyaddeen (died 1986), a Sri Lankan Sufi who arrived in Pennsylvania in 1971, and whose influence was limited to his immediate circle in the US. He is known to some contemporary Mexican Sufis (FORSVIK, 2014: 16), but otherwise seems to have had no impact in Latin America. The second was Mehmet Nazim Adil (1922-2013), generally known as Shaykh Nazim al-Haqqani, a Turkish Sufi of the Naqshbandi *tariqa* who first visited in London in 1974 and who became the leading global Sufi *shaykh* of the twentieth century. His influence in Latin America (as elsewhere) has been considerable. The third was Süleyman Loras (1904-85), a Turkish Sufi of the Mevlevi *tariqa* who first visited California in 1976, and who was key to the establishment of the distinctive Mevlevi *sema*, the ceremony known as “whirling” or “turning” that often serves as an icon for Sufism, but is in fact characteristic of this one *tariqa*. A number of groups in Latin America derive from him. The fourth was Muzaffer Ozak (1916-85), a Turkish Sufi of the Halveti-Jerrahi *tariqa* who arrived in America in 1978. Again, a number of groups in Latin America derive from him.

In addition to these important “traveling *shaykhs*,” a number of other comparable *tariqas* were established in the USA and in Europe, with *shaykhs* connected to the Muslim world and members predominantly from the west. Some of these also established a presence in Latin America. Finally, some *shaykhs* connected to the Muslim world established a presence in Latin America directly, without US or European intermediaries.

The fifth wave has given rise to more currently existing Sufi groups in Latin America than any other wave. The overall picture is shown in figure 4.

Figure 4: The fifth wave in Latin America

Category	Group	Based in	Found in
Travelling shaykh	Haqqaniyya	Cyprus	Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Brazil,
	Rabbaniyya		
	Threshold Society	US	Mexico, Chile
	Rosa de Nazaré	Brazil	Brazil
Muslim world via USA or Europe	Jerrahi Order of America	New York	Argentina, Brazil, Chile
	Nur Ashki Jerrahi Community	New York	Mexico, Brazil
	Shadhiliyya	US	Mexico??
	Ansariyya	New York	Mexico, Brazil, Chile
Muslim world direct to Latin America	Ni‘matullahiyya	London	Mexico?
	Naqshbandiyya Khalidiyya	Istanbul	Brazil
	School of Sufi Teaching	New Delhi	Brazil
	Karkariya	Morocco	Brazil

The Naqshbandiyya Haqqaniyya Rabbaniyya

Shaykh Nazim was a Naqshbandi, but was such a major force in the Sufism of his time that his *tariqa* came to be named after him as the Naqshbandiyya Haqqaniyya. It is also referred to as the Rabbaniyya, an alternative title that Shaykh Nazim himself gave it. The Naqshbandiyya Haqqaniyya Rabbaniyya shares its fifteenth-century origin with the Naqshbandiyya of Omar Ali-Shah, discussed above, but nothing more. Like the Murabitun, and like most *tariqas* in the Muslim world (and unlike Omar Ali-Shah), it stresses the strict

observance of all aspects of regular Islamic practice. It remains open, however, to other views and practices, so long as these are acceptable in Islamic terms.

The Haqqaniyya Rabbaniyya is probably Latin America's most visible *tariqa*, partly because its followers are themselves very visible, generally wearing the Haqqaniyya Rabbaniyya's own distinctive version of late Ottoman dress, which includes turbans for men and *hijabi* headscarves for women. It is present in Mexico, Panama, Peru, Brazil, Argentina, and Chile.

The Haqqaniyya Rabbaniyya in Argentina is one of the best studied *tariqas* in Latin America, as Lucía Salinas is completing a PhD on the topic and has already published some articles. Salinas has studied five communities: the first to be established (in 1990), in San Lorenzo, a town outside the city of Rosario in the province of Santa Fe, 350 km north-west of Buenos Aires; another in Rosario itself; a third in La Consulta, Mendoza, a small town close to the foothills of the Andes in north-west Argentina; a fourth near El Bolsón, Río Negro, in the north of sparsely-populated Patagonia; and a fifth in Mar del Plata, a seaside city some 400 km south of Buenos Aires (SALINAS, 2015: 93). There are also Haqqani Rabbani groups in Córdoba, a city north-west of Rosario (facebook.com/pg/Sufismo-Cordoba-Argentina-296867547191181), and in Buenos Aires itself (facebook.com/groups/230070330422699). The enneagram, which as we have seen was developed initially by Latin American Gurdjieffian Sufis, notably Naranjo and Ochazo, is now taught professionally by Abdul Karim Baudino, a prominent Argentinian Haqqani. The cross-over is interesting, and would reward further study.

In Mexico, only one group of the Haqqaniyya Rabbaniyya has been identified (facebook.com/abdulkabirmexico), led by Abdul Kabir in Mexico City, with 560 Facebook followers. In Panama, one group has been identified (facebook.com/panamasufi), with 718 Facebook followers. In Peru, one group has been identified, led by Nureddín Cueva in Lima, with 536 Facebook followers (facebook.com/islam.en.peru). None of these groups have been studied, though Sylvie Taussig is now starting work in Lima.

The Haqqaniyya in Brazil has been studied in part. It was first established in Rio de Janeiro in 1996, six years after the first Argentinian group, and from this derived two more

groups, one in São Paulo and one in Salvador, Brazil's fourth city (ALVES DA SILVA FILHO, *op. cit.*: 113).

The Haqqaniyya Rabbaniyya in Chile has not yet been studied. It is based in Peñalolén in the outskirts of Santiago, and also has a presence in Villarica, Cautín, a town about 1,000 km. south of Santiago. It is led by Matías “Abdul Matin” Vicente Cruz.

The Haqqaniyya Rabbaniyya is undoubtedly Latin America's largest *tariqa*, or perhaps group of *tariqas*. It is harder to say what is the largest *tariqa* in the USA or in Europe, but in both those cases it might also be the Haqqaniyya Rabbaniyya. It is thus appropriate that Lucía Salinas is devoting her PhD research to its Argentinian groups, and desirable that more research completes our picture of it elsewhere.

The Mevleviyya

The third of the “traveling *shaykhs*,” Süleyman Loras, spent less time in the West than Shaykh Nazim did, and never established a global following comparable to that of the Haqqaniyya Rabbaniyya. Two main groups derived from him: the Mevlevi Order of America, which operates at a number of locations in the US but only one outside the US, in Germany (and none in Latin America); and the Threshold Society of Kabir and Camille Helminski, which has a branch in Mexico that is tightly connected to its US parent, for example translating the latest messages of Kabir Helminski into Spanish for its blog (sociedadthreshold.wordpress.com). The Threshold Society in Mexico, then, appears to resemble the Threshold Society in London, as one part of a single global movement. The Threshold Society is notable for its approach to Islam. The Helminskis and the senior members of the Society self-identify as Muslims but distance themselves from many aspects of Middle Eastern culture, but other members are not required to be Muslim. They are, however, encouraged to follow practices that make them in effect Muslim in practice, if not always in principle (SEDGWICK, Forthcoming B).

A second and more independent branch of the Threshold Society at one point existed in Chile, run by Gastón Fontaine (born c. 1949), a businessman. Fontaine read a book by Helminski, liked it, translated it into Spanish, and then visited Helminski in the USA. He

later met Refik Algán (b. 1952), a Turkish Sufi, and Fontaine's group now refers to Algán, who visits Chile periodically (Monsalve, 2014).

A third Mevlevi group, the Rosa de Nazaré, was established in Brazil in 2004 in Nazaré Paulista, a town 60 km north of São Paulo. The Nazaré Mevlevihane (Mevlevi lodge) is led by Maria Rosa de Freitas Alloni, a Jungian psychologist, under the authority of Sidki Çelebi Öztorun, an unidentified Turkish Mevlevi. Mevlevi *sema* is not presented in connection with Islam on the website of the Rosa de Nazaré, which also offers a variety of other spiritual retreats in beautiful rural surroundings (rosadenazare.org.br).

To what extent Islam lies behind the dances in this case, then, remains to be established.

The Halvetiyya-Jerrahiyya

The fourth of the “traveling *shaykhs*,” Muzaffer Ozak, was assisted and promoted in New York by three very different Americans. Tosun Bayrak (1926-2018), a radical performance artist of Turkish origin, translated Ozak’s talks into English. Lex “Nur” Hixon (1942-95), an eclectic student of religion and a radio-show host, promoted Ozak on air. Philippa “Fariha” Friedrich (born 1947), an heiress and patron of the arts, provided financial support and further promoted Ozak. After Ozak’s death, his New York following split into two groups: The Jerrahi Order of America, led by Bayrak and close to mainstream Turkish Sufi Islam, and the Nur Ashki Jerrahi Community, led by Hixon and close to eclectic approaches and to American culture, though still Islamic. After Hixon’s death, Friedrich took over the Nur Ashki Jerrahi Community as *shaykha* (SEDGWICK, forthcoming B).

Both the Jerrahi Order of America and the Nur Ashki Jerrahi Community have groups in Latin America. The strictly Islamic example of the Jerrahi Order of America is followed by the Orden Sufí Halveti Yerrahi (sufismo.org.ar/contact) and the Tariqa Halveti-Jerrahi (yerrahi.com) in Buenos Aires, the Ordem Jerrahi no Brasil in São Paulo (halvetijerrahi.org.br), and the Tariqa Halveti-Jerrahi in Santiago de Chile (jerrahi.cl). Of these, only the Ordem Jerrahi no Brasil has been studied (*Ibidem*, pp. 130-32). The Tariqa Halveti-Jerrahi in Buenos Aires also had a Gurdjieffian origin, as its shaykh, Ernesto

“Abdel Qadr” Ocampo, published a book on the true master of Gurdjieff (Falletti and Ocampo, ND).

The more eclectic example of the Nur Ashki Jerrahi Community is followed by the Comunidad Sufí Nur Ashki al Yerrahi de México in Mexico City. This order, which is also led by a woman, Edlin “Amina Teslima” Ortiz Graham, has been well studied. The Comunidad Sufí Nur Ashki al Yerrahi derives from a visit to Mexico by Hixon in 1987, during which Hixon established the Jerrahiyya among a group of dancers of the Conchero (*Ibidem*, pp: 49-51), a national folk dance some of whose practitioners tend towards a form of neo-paganism. Hixon’s eclectic approach to religion was nicely illustrated during this visit by his gift to the shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe of a relic of the Prophet Muhammad that Ozak had brought to New York from Istanbul (Hernández González, 2009: 50). A Jerrahi group was then established in Mexico City by Ortiz, a Puerto Rican journalist who had been a member of the Jerahiyya in New York since its beginnings, and who had then been posted to Mexico as correspondent for Univisión, the US Spanish-language channel (*Ibidem*, pp. 47, 52-53). The group, housed in the same building as the original Univisión offices in the upscale Roma district, holds the same ceremonies as the Nur Ashki Jerrahi Community in New York: *dhikr*, *wird*, and Friday prayers, during which men and women pray side by side (FORSVIK, 2014: 17), as they do in New York—and almost nowhere else, as women generally pray behind men in Islam.

Ortiz herself follows the approach to Islam typical of the Nur Ashki Jerrahi Community. As she put it to a Swedish researcher, “As a Muslim I do Salat, which is the five prayers per day, which I try to do everyday because it is very helpful to me.” She would not fit in to what she called “conservative Islam,” she went on, because of things like gender relations (*Ibidem*, p. 20). Followers of “conservative Islam,” who might include followers of the Jerrahi Order of America, would probably also object to Ortiz’s eclecticism: as well as following Islamic and Sufi practices, she also does yoga and meditation, and studies Advaita Vedanta under an Indian monk of the Ramakrishna Order of Calcutta, and Zen Buddhism under the Japanese Soto Lineage (*Ibidem*, pp. 7, 16). Ortiz has also been active in interfaith dialog, working with an Orthodox rabbi to set up the Consejo Interreligioso de México (HERNÁNDEZ GONZÁLEZ, *op. cit.*: 30).

A further small group in Mexico City, the Naamiiyah Yarrahi Arifi under Jorge Luis Naude, evidently derived from the Comunidad Sufí Nur Ashki al Yerrahi, since although its own account refers to the Orden Jalveti Yerrahi (not the Comunidad Sufí Nur Ashki al Yerrahi), it also refers to the Roma district (where the Comunidad Sufí Nur Ashki al Yerrahi was based), and Naude also takes an eclectic approach, referring to the Hermetic tradition and Kabbala as well as to Sefer Efendi, Ozak's successor in Istanbul (yarrahiarifi.com). “Nuestra comunidad es pequeña,” the group’s website announces, “pero el Islam es difícil de llevar, y eso ha provocado que muchos de los miembros no continúen con su conocimiento, sin embargo nuestro Maestro es inamovible en su tarea” (yarrahiarifi.com): “Our group is small, but Islam is hard to bear, and this has meant that many members do not continue with their knowledge, but our Master is immovable in his mission.”

Alves da Silva Filho has identified two further Jerrahi groups in Brazil, one in São Paulo following a Mexican group (presumably the Comunidad Sufí Nur Ashki al Yerrahi de México) and one in Rio de Janeiro following an Argentinian group (presumably the Orden Sufí Halveti Yerrahi or the Tariqa Halveti-Jerrahi) (ALVES DA SILVA FILHO, *op. cit.*: 113). These two provide further examples of the pan-Latin-American reach of at least some Sufi networks. It would be interesting to study the non-Mexican groups in the detail in which the Mexican group has been studied.

Other US- and Europe-based fifth-wave groups

In addition to these four “traveling shaykhs,” three other *shaykhs* built followings in the US or UK that gave rise to small groups in Latin America. The Ansari Qadiri Rifai Sufi Order, based in Nassau, near Albany, New York State was established by Taner Tarsusi “Ansari,” a Turk who studied in Michigan, USA, and is now run by Ansari and his wife, Anne “Muzeyyen.” It derives its legitimacy from Muhyiddin Ansari (1897-1978), a Turkish Rifa’i shaykh, but is focused on Western conditions, and has several groups in the US. It also has several groups in South Africa, and groups in some European countries (aqrtsufi.org). In Latin America it lists groups in Mexico and Brazil, both under Mohammad Abdullah, a Californian who lives in the small central Mexican city of

Juventino Rosas, Guanajuato. There was also for a while a group in Chile under Erich von Bischoffshausen (aqrtsufi.org), a psychologist.

A similar group is a rare Shi'i *tariqa* that is based in London, the Ni'matullahiyya of Javad Nurbakhsh (1926-2008). This has an address in Guanajuato City, central Mexico (nematollahi.org). The website is in Spanish, and publications are available in Spanish, but as these are priced in Euros, the implication is that there is more activity in Spain (where two centers are listed) than in Guanajuato City, where there may in fact be few if any activities. Guanajuato City is the capital of the province of Guanajuato, in which lies both León, the home of the presumably Maryami Fundacion de estudios tradicionales, and Juventino Rosas, home of Mohammad Abdullah of the Ansari Qadiri Rifai Sufi Order. It can hardly be coincidence that Mexican Sufism outside Mexico City focuses on the province of Guanajuato, but the explanation for this remains to be found.

The final group in this category is the Sufi Center México. The leading US follower of Muhammad al-Jamal (1935-2015), a Palestinian Sufi of the Shadhili *tariqa*, Stephen "Nooruddeen" Durkee (born 1938) (DURKEE, 2015) established several groups and organizations in the US, including the Shadhiliyya Sufi Center in St Helena, California (suficenter.org). A Sufi Center México was then established in Mexico City, and started a website, mostly to publicize a visit to Mexico City by Ibrahim Jaffe, a US Sufi practitioner of "Medical Spiritual Healing (MSH)." The website has not been updated since, and has not been completed (some parts of it still have template dummy text) (marureal.wixsite.com/suficentermexico).

All these other US- and Europe-based fifth-wave groups seem small, and some may, in fact, have no more than a few members, and or even be inactive. They are not a high priority for research.

In addition, there are some further groups that belong to the fifth wave in terms of their connection with Islam and the Muslim world and their predominately convert membership, but do not have any known connection with US or European groups. This makes them especially interesting. None of them, however, have yet been studied.

Conclusion

A preliminary survey of Sufism in Latin America indicates that all the waves that have been noted in Europe and the USA are also found in Latin America. The first, literary wave reached Latin America somewhat late. The second, universalist wave reached Latin America at the same time as it was developing elsewhere, and although it remained based in Europe, and mostly in Paris, Óscar Ichazo (a Bolivian) and Claudio Naranjo (a Chilean) developed the Enneagram into a global phenomenon. The third, “New Age” wave likewise reached Latin America at much the same time as it was developing elsewhere, and here there were two developments unique to Latin America: the group following Omar Ali-Shah (though this also existed in Spain) and the mass conversions in Chiapas, Mexico.

The fourth wave of “ethnic” tariqas is as yet little developed in Latin America, as Muslim immigration is has been relatively limited, with only one notable “ethnic” *tariqa*, the Lebanese-based Yashrutiyya, until very recently. Of course, all the other groups and *tariqas* discussed were also in some sense “ethnic,” in that they followed the majority ethnicity of the country in which they developed. Sufism may cross ethnic boundaries, but ethnic differences remain.

The fifth wave also reached Latin America at much the same time as it was developing elsewhere. The Haqqaniyya Rabbaniyya became Latin America’s most important *tariqa*, or perhaps group of *tariqas*. Several US-based *tariqas* established a presence in Latin America. Several tariqas also established themselves in Latin America without US or European intermediaries: The Rosa de Nazaré, the Naqshbandiyya Khalidiyya, the School of Sufi Teaching, and the Karkariya. All of these are currently found only in Brazil.

Research on Sufism in Latin America is, as has been said, patchy. Nothing has been done on the first wave, and almost nothing has been done on the second wave, though something is known of the history of Guénonian Traditionalism in Argentina. Research is needed on the Sufi Movement, and on Guénonian Traditionalism outside Argentina. Claudio Naranjo’s background needs attention, as does the whole Enneagram phenomenon, which as has been said may well be one of Latin America’s most successful cultural exports.

For the third wave, the Murabitin of Chiapas have been well studied, but little else has been done. The Naqshbandiyya of Omar Ali-Shah are especially interesting as they are specifically Latin American. For the fourth wave, the Yashrutiyya in São Paulo have probably received adequate attention, and it may be appropriate to wait a little until other fourth-wave groups are better established before starting work on them.

For the fifth wave, the study of the Haqqaniyya Rabbaniyya is underway, but only in Argentina. Work on the Haqqaniyya Rabbaniyya is thus also required in Mexico, Panama, Peru, Brazil, and Chile to complete our understanding of this phenomenon. Similarly, although the Nur Ashki Jerrahi Community in Mexico City has been well studied, work on non-Mexican groups deriving from Muzaffer Ozak is needed, in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. Other fifth-wave groups would probably reward attention: The Threshold Society in Mexico and Chile, and the Rosa de Nazaré in Brazil.

There has been an impression among many researchers that the past and present of Sufism in Latin America is not of great interest, at least outside Chiapas. As this article has shown, this is not the case. Sufism in Latin America is of importance for scholars interested in religion and esotericism in Latin America, and also of importance for scholars of Sufism globally.

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