The credit for the 'Renaissance' itself, however, is not to be given solely to the toleration of the orthodox institution. Even in its intellectual and religious aspects, much of it was due in a positive sense to unorthodox and sectarian influences, and to the widespread growth of material culture resulting from economic development and prosperity. These also, during the preceding centuries, had been developing independently of the orthodox religious culture; and at the time when they came to fruition, in the 4th century A.H., the orthodox were the less able to control their intellectual or material activities because, from the 4th to the middle of the 5th century, almost the whole of the central Islamic lands were governed by Shi'ite princes.

There may be a certain causal relation between these facts and a very remarkable feature of the Islamic Renaissance: the personal and individual character of most of its cultural achievements. Orthodoxy from the first stressed the 'collectivity' as against the individual; even the individual personalities who played a leading part in the evolution of the religious institution were more often representatives of collective tendencies than creative thinkers. The great biographical dictionaries of orthodox scholars are concerned very little with their individuality as persons, but only with their contributions to the transmission of the collective heritage. It is a tempting conclusion that it was the other currents of intellectual activity, outside the orthodox institution, which were mainly responsible for the appearance and activity of those individuals whose personal contributions swelled the total of achievements of medieval Islamic culture, even when they themselves were orthodox.

It may be surprising, at first sight, that many of the most active movements and personalities in the 3rd and 4th centuries have Shi'ite attachments, since Shi'ism in its organized dogmatic institution is even more authoritarian than orthodoxy. But Shi'ism at this time was more of a widely diffused emotional or intellectual tendency, sometimes combined with Sunnī orthodoxy, and it is erroneous to visualize hard and fast lines of sectarian division as already solidified in the 4th century. It was natural that individuals who were emotionally or intellectually opposed to the developing tendencies within orthodoxy should find more freedom in the looser and vaguer current of Shi'ism. Moreover, although the orthodox institution had asserted its spiritual independence of the political institution, it still continued to be associated with the civil authorities, partly because of its horror of disunity, and partly owing to the government's control of religious patronage. For similar reasons, the bureaucracy and the feudal landowners were, as a whole, strongly orthodox, and thus the leaders of orthodoxy not
only were classed, but classed themselves, among the élite (al-khāṣṣat),
in contradistinction to the merchants, troops, artisans, peasants, and
nomads (al-qawāmm). Many religious leaders and teachers, as will
be seen later, were embarrassed or dissatisfied with this situation, and
while their strong feeling for the cohesion of the Community kept
most of them loyal to orthodoxy, the more extreme or more indepen-
dent were liable to be attracted into one or other of the opposition
movements.

The phenomenal expansion of industry and commerce had in the
meantime created a network of cities in the eastern provinces, with a
highly developed urban life and prosperous merchant communities,
possessing knowledge of the world, intelligence, boldness and indepen-
dence. Their interests (as usual in flourishing commercial civiliza-
tions) were mainly secular, even while they remained attached to
orthodoxy; but they no longer found adequate intellectual nourishment
in Persian romances or the classical Arab humanities. With the political
unification of Western Asia and the multiple interactions between its
cities, there came a rapid and widespread revival of the traditions of
Hellenistic culture, followed by a general expansion of intellectual
curiosity, the transplantation into Arabic literature of the physical and
natural sciences, astrology, Hellenistic themes in tales and romances,
and a new interest in geographical works and travels in foreign
countries.

At the other end of the scale was an urban proletariat of poor
artisans, freedmen and slaves. In between, there grew up a floating
population of commission-men, agents, travelling teachers, poets, and
vagrants of all kinds. The social and economic grievances of these
classes were exploited by the Shi'ite opponents of the orthodox in-
stitution, but their successes among the beduins of the Syrian desert,
the cultivators in Lower Iraq, and the proletariat of the cities created
only nuclei of social disorder, without constructive objects or cultural
ideals. Far more important for the development of Islamic culture was
the 'reformed' Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlī movement towards the end of the
third century, which deliberately aimed at building up a new religious
institution on the basis of the integration of Islam with Hellenistic
culture, and at enlisting the new educated classes in its support. The
leaders of the movement set up regular centres for systematic in-
struction and organized an extensive missionary propaganda. The
popular masses were not neglected, and in the city lodges or guilds
were constituted for craftsmen. 1 By the date of the transfer of the
Fāṭimid Caliphate from Tunisia to Cairo (973 A.D.) the whole Muslim
world was honeycombed with Fāṭimid agencies.

The significance of the Fāṭimid movement in the Islamic Renais-

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1 The evidence for this is inferential, but fairly convincing; see B. Lewis,
sance is not to be measured only by the contributions of its professed adherents or sympathisers (such as Al-Rāzī and Al-Fārābī in philosophy; ʿAlī b. Yūnus in astronomy; Ibn al-Haitham in physics and optics; Māsawīh and ʿAlī b. Ridyān in medicine; the treatises of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā in the natural sciences), but by the encouragement which it gave to intellectual activities of all kinds, even among its political or religious opponents, and its influence long survived the fall of the Fāṭimid Caliphate in 1171 A.D. It spread a spirit of free enquiry, individual endeavour and interaction of ideas, which expressed itself in the works of almost all the outstanding writers of Persia and Iraq in the fourth century, and most notably in Ibn Sinā (Avicenna), and found echoes even in Muslim Spain, in spite of the restrictive tendencies of the orthodox Mālikī school and the Almoravid rulers.

For a short time, this advance and diffusion of learning took on something of the character of an organic movement, spreading to every part of the Islamic world, irrespective of political and sectarian boundaries. A new power of intellectual organization was manifested, new methods or combinations were tried out, new types of production evolved in which to present the results of scientific study and literary culture in intelligible form to men of general education, 2 great libraries were built up and observatories founded. The old social divisions between Arab and non-Arab were obliterated in the new civilization and even those which separated Muslims from non-Muslims were softened. Jewish and Christian scholars participated in all intellectual activities on an equality with Muslim scholars; this reflected also upon their social status, and admitted them to an honourable place in the bureaucracy and the public services, though they continued to be exposed from time to time to popular excesses. The leaders of orthodoxy themselves were drawn into the general current to the extent of underpinning its dogmatic foundations by a natural theology derived from prevalent scientific theories; but they were fully conscious of the heretical tendencies present in many branches of study and maintained a jealous independence of the inverse efforts of men like Ibn Sinā to relate the prevailing philosophical theories to the principles of Islam.

In general, therefore, the consequence of this intellectual expansion was to broaden the whole range of the Arabic humanities by the incorporation of the legacy of Hellenistic culture, which survived as a permanent element in the Arabic-Islamic cultural tradition, uneasily yoked with the religious and old Arabic disciplines. In the arts and architecture also there was a parallel expansion, as the old pre-Muslim arts, Hellenistic, Syrian, and Persian were revived, developed, and diffused, with the requisite adaptations, to create a new Muslim art,

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whose cultural foundations and significance, however, have not yet been adequately studied.3

The Islamic Renaissance suffered, on the other hand, from serious weaknesses. It was a culture and a civilization of the city, which confirmed the already marked urban character of the orthodox culture, arising out of the association of the orthodox institution with government. The immense economic development of the cities completed this process by the concentration of wealth and intellectual activities in them, to the exclusion of the countryside, which had little or no share in the developing civilization, and remained divided from the cities by a widening social gulf. Furthermore, even within the cities, the instability and inorganic character of the political institutions, and the social tensions which prevented the development of municipal institutions, offered a constant threat to cultural activities outside the range of orthodoxy, which itself maintained an ambiguous attitude towards them. Hence, with all the remarkable intellectual achievement of the Islamic Renaissance, its foundations remained shallow, rooted neither in the deep soil of the Islamic movement nor in strong social organisms. It was confined to a narrow (if for the time being widespread and prosperous) layer of urban society, and dependent on temporary factors. So long as a flourishing urban civilization existed, local retractions in one region might be counterbalanced by expansion in another, but its survival was bound up with the survival of the temporary factors to which it owed its existence.

VII

The orthodox revival in the 5th century of the Hijra (the 11th of the Christian era) marks the turning point in the history of Islamic culture. It began as a systematic effort to remove or counteract all the factors of instability and disunity political, social, religious and moral, within the Muslim Community, but led ultimately, as will be seen, to a thoroughgoing revolution.

The peculiarly inorganic character of the political institutions during the two preceding centuries was due partly to the conflict with the orthodox institution in the 3rd century and partly to the composition of the military forces. The result of the former had been to delimit sharply the functions of the political institution, confining the activities of the governors to maintenance of order and public security, military policy and financial administration. All other functions—the administration of law,4 education, social institutions—remained the jealously-guarded preserve of the religious authorities. The religious institution

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4 Except for special administrative courts for the army and bureaucracy.
thus interposed between government and subjects, and claimed their exclusive loyalty as the true representatives of Islamic authority. So long, however, as the army was recruited from among the subjects directly, or though the association of the feudal nobles with the government, there still remained a positive link between rulers and people. When this was removed by the formation of professional armies of slaves and mercenaries no organic relation was left; the only remaining connection was the tax-gathering function. It has been well said that in medieval Islam there were never real 'states' but only 'empires' more or less extensive, and that the only political unity was the ideological but powerful concept of the Dār al-Islām, the common homeland of all Muslims. 5

The indifference, passing into hostility, of the general population to the political organizations made the existence and survival of rulers, dynasties and régimes dependent, with rare exceptions, on the quality of their military forces. Since the religious institution was, for the reasons already given, precluded from acting effectively as a mediating force, the political history of the later 3rd and 4th centuries was mainly occupied by the struggle between Caliphs, princes, and armed forces for power eventually won, in every case, by the army commanders. Thus the 4th century saw the complete breakdown of the political organization built up by the Caliph on the Roman and Persian foundations. 6 The final blow was given during the century of Shi'ite governments in Western Asia, an era of widespread misrule and anarchy, which bore most heavily on the countryside, although the disorders and ideological divisions affected the cities also in varying degrees.

The urban communities in all parts of the medieval Muslim world have one remarkable feature in common: the development of more or less organized popular parties, and the frequency of violent outbreaks either between them or against the government. This may be explained partly by the nomadic heritage of many citizens, partly by the existence of a large proletariat, whose grievances were championed or exploited by local reformers or agitators, often in combination with anti-Sunnī movements. Examples may be found in the standing feud in Baghdad between the Sunnīs and the Shi'ites, and the anti-İsmā'īlī riots of the Karrāmites in the Persian cities. 7 But as often the rival parties were of the same sect, or of different orthodox schools, as in the feuds between Ḥanafites and Shāfī'ites in Khūrasān. Lawlessness on the part of the troops led repeatedly to the

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6 It survived under the Fāṭimid Caliphs in Egypt until the middle of the 5th century, but then broke down there also.

formation of citizen organizations for defence and reprisals, which sometimes became no more than robber gangs. This lack of internal unity in the cities, sharpened by the mutual suspicions of proletariat, merchants and governors, even found physical expression in their organization in separate and independent quarters, with their own defences. In such features, as well as in the absence of leadership by the merchant classes (who were inclined to keep out of public life), are probably to be found the reasons for the failure of the medieval Islamic cities to develop organized municipal institutions.

The orthodox revival began at the end of the 4th century in Khurāsān, the one important region in Western Asia which had not fallen under Shi'i government, apparently in response to the challenge of the organized missionary activities of the Fāṭimids on the one hand, and the consolidation of 'Twelver' Shi'ism into a rival religious institution during the century of Shi'ite rule in Western Persia and Iraq. Early in the 5th century, the Shāfī'ites were organizing orthodox colleges (known as madrasas) in imitation of the Fāṭimid missionary institutions. But the revival had also a political aim: the liberation of the Caliphate from Shi'ite control. In pursuance of their object, the Sunni leaders formed what amounted to an alliance with the Seljuk leaders, of the immigrating Turkish tribes from the East, an alliance formally ratified by the Caliph himself after the Seljuk conquest of Western Persia and Iraq (1055).

The renewed association under the Seljuks of the ruling and orthodox institutions was drawn still closer by the initiative of the vizier Nizām al-Mulk in founding Nizāmiya madrasas. These were not only religious seminaries for directing and systematizing higher education, but training colleges in the Arabic humanities for a new class of administrators, the "orthodox bureaucracy" which replaced the former secretarial class, and in the Seljuk empire and its successors held a place as directors of civil administration alongside the military governors of provinces and cities. Yet at the same time the functional division between the ruling and religious institutions was more sharply defined than ever by the formal constitution of the Sultanate, as the organ of political and military administration, alongside (though ideally subordinate to) the Caliphate, as the head of the religious institution. It was the same Nizām al-Mulk who reaffirmed this duality by restating his Siyāsat-nāma, the old Persian tradition of monarchy, with its independent ethical standards based on force and opportunism, thus perpetuating the inner disharmony which has always proved to be the principal weakness of Islam as a politico-social organism.

Nevertheless, by the device of forming an administrative class be-

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8 The lead in this development had apparently been taken by the now obscure Karrāmite sect.

longing to the religious institution and setting it alongside the secular governors, it is probable that something more was aimed at than a merely formal link between them. It is reasonably certain that one object was to preserve the spiritual independence of the orthodox institution against the increasing power and absolutism of the temporal princes, and at the same time to maintain (or to recreate) the unity of the Community. Each party was expected to find its own interest in supporting the other; "kingship and religion are twins." A further measure of Nizām al-Mulk indicates his strong sense of social order. Both the military organization and the bureaucratic institution were assimilated to the old (and by now almost extinct) Persian landowning class by a reconstructed feudal system. Thus by the dual means of association with the religious institution and tying the army to the soil, the ruling institution would regain in some measure the organic character which it had lost. By the same association the religious institution would gain the support of the ruling institution in its efforts to recreate unity; for it must not be forgotten that the orthodox revival was a deliberate reaction against the experience of division during the period of Shi'ite governments.

The same pursuit of unity is manifest in the gradual concentration of all higher education, both for religious and public service, in the new madrasas. It is improbable that this was deliberately designed to narrow down education and circumscribe intellectual activities, by control and patronage, to the religious and philological sciences. The fact of narrowing down was rather the natural consequence of this concentration combined with other factors. Firstly, it was inevitable that the attempt should be made to bring all other studies into an organic relation with the religious and literary interests of the madrasa; this involved some degree of standardization, and the teaching of these standardized materials in the authoritarian manner already described. Secondly, once the Hellenistic elements were assimilated into the Arabic humanities there were no new elements from outside which could be brought into Islamic culture to challenge the established disciplines or give a fresh impulse to intellectual development. Thirdly, the inner decline of urban culture (to be described later) brought with it a narrowing down of intellectual interests.

For some centuries however, the influences of the Islamic Renaissance remained active within the orthodox institution, and were not entirely crushed out by the process of standardization. Intellectual energies found new outlets in place of philosophical, scientific and secular studies. It is instructive to observe the consequences of the Sunnī revival movement in Syria and Egypt under Nuraddin and

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10 The only exception to this was the Chinese influence mediated at a later date through the Mongols, but this was fleeting and peripheral, and left an effective mark only in the domain of art in the further Eastern provinces.
Saladin and their successors (under whom a powerful orthodox bureaucracy maintained an exceptionally close association with the rulers). After the general decay of cultural life in the later Fāṭimid period, the introduction of the organized Nizāmiya type of education brought an outburst of intellectual life, literature and cultural activities of many kinds, including a revival of art and architecture. For two centuries they remained at a high level before beginning to be affected by the germs of decay from standardization and the increasing subordination of the orthodox institution to the Mamlūk military aristocracy.

At the same time, the Sunnī revival aimed at eradicating Shi’ism not only as a political force, but as an element of moral disunity. This proved to be, on the whole, surprisingly easy. In the intellectual field Shi’ite dogmatics were smothered by the formulation of orthodox dogmatics in final and authoritative treatises. Among the general public the earlier sympathetic attitude towards Shi’ism was largely dissipated by the century of Shi’ite misgovernment and the weakness of the later Fāṭimids. But the orthodox leaders wisely gave satisfaction to the emotional attachment felt for the house of ʿAlī by incorporating the Shi’ite shrines as objects of veneration within the orthodox Community. Shi’ism survived only in fragmentary groups, particularly among the tribesmen of Lower Iraq; and the activist movement of neo-Ismā‘īlis or ‘Assasins,’ organized in the mountainous fringes of Northern Persia and Northern Syria, gained no following in spite of its terrorist campaign against the orthodox rulers and bureaucracy, but rather strengthened the movement of Sunnī reunion by the hostility which it aroused.

The Sunnī revival, linked with Seljuk expansion, achieved by these means a striking success in reuniting and integrating at a common level the whole urban culture of Western Asia and Egypt. The rapidity of the process, however, and the solidity of the results indicate that it did not so much create this unity as bring to fruition already existing trends. The foundations had in fact been laid during the preceding centuries by the slow but persistent pressure of the standardized Shari‘ah law in remoulding the social ethics and institutions of all Muslims, and substituting its common processes and attitudes for their divergent older traditions. There still remained, however, the problem of the social divisions and antagonisms within the cities, and, related to it, the problem of extending the influence of the orthodox religious movement to the populations outside urban radius.

VIII

Among the established agricultural populations within the Islamic lands, it is generally possible to trace the gradual advance of the in-
fluence of the Sharī'ah. 11 But from the 5th century conditions were radically changed in all parts of the Muslim world by the resurgence of the nomads: the irruption of Turkish tribes in East and North Persia, Mesopotamia and North Syria, Arab tribal movements in Syria, Egypt, and North Africa, Berber movements in North Africa. In large areas the substitution of pastoral for agricultural economy led to economic retrogression; and although the nomads were kept in relative check at first by Seljuk imperial power, from the middle of the 6th century they were throwing off all control, and reducing the cities in Persia and the northern provinces to islands of 'oasis culture,' dependent for their survival on armed garrisons of imperial troops or the forces of local princes. Thus at the very moment when the orthodox institution had succeeded in integrating the urban culture of Islam under its aegis, that culture itself was increasingly hemmed in by the nomadic expansion and endangered by the immigration of new Turkish tribes who were not even nominally Muslim.

In these circumstances, the leaders of the orthodox institution began to realize the value of the revivalist missions led by Ṣūfī preachers among the urban proletariat and in the countryside, which they had hitherto regarded with some suspicion and hostility. The pietist missionaries who laboured to produce conversions among the artisans and proletariat were inclined to share the proletariat's suspicions of the orthodox institution, as too closely identified with the political powers, even if they were still more strongly opposed to sectarian divisions and activist movements of all kinds. They disliked, moreover, the intellectualizing tendencies in orthodox theology, which seemed to emphasize external profession to the detriment of personal devotion. The orthodox leaders, for their part, distrusted the mystical and gnostic currents which were flowing into Sufism from the older Asian religions, the theosophical claims to union with the Divine, and the organized religious exercises for its adherents which threatened to displace the mosque rituals.

But the spiritual vitality of the Ṣūfī movement could not be denied, and indeed some accommodation with it was forced upon the orthodox leaders by imperative circumstances. Long before the Seljuk invasion, Ṣūfī missionaries had extended their activities into and beyond the frontier areas, and had been instrumental in the conversion of the Turkish tribes, among whom consequently, their influence was greater than that of the orthodox doctors. The association of the Sunnī reaction with the Seljuks thus reopened the question of the relations between the Ṣūfīs and the orthodox institution. It was not an easy problem for the theologians, however, in their quest for unity, to integrate the Ṣūfī movement in the orthodox religious institution, until the great

11 For example, in the disappearance of Qarmatism in Iraq and of dualistic heresies in Persia, and slow conversion of the Copts in Egypt.
theologian Al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), in his most important work, demonstrated the truly Islamic foundation of Sufism, and reconciled both by the argument that orthodoxy without the revivalist leaven of Sufism was an empty profession, and Sufism without orthodoxy dangerous subjectivism.

Henceforward, in the movement of reunion the religious institution is represented both by the orthodox institution (including the religious bureaucracy) and by the Sūfi shaikhs, with the special function of missionary work in the cities and countryside. Everywhere Sūfi convents were founded simultaneously with madrasas, and on the whole the leaders of both wings co-operated with relatively little friction or jealousy. Gradually however, the Sūfi movement, organizing itself as a rival institution, drained the orthodox institution of most of its vigour and vitality, and finally, when the dwindling of the religious bureaucracy in face of the encroachments of the ruling military classes in Egypt and India reduced the orthodox institution to a dangerous dependence on the ruling institution, finally found itself the champion of spiritual independence against both the rulers and the official "ulamā".

From the 7th-13th centuries, moreover, Sufism increasingly attracted the creative social and intellectual energies within the Community, to become the bearer or instrument of a social and cultural revolution—a process hastened on by the destruction of the still vigorous centres of Islamic culture in North Persia during the Mongol invasion of 1220, and the Mongol occupation of all Western Asia (except Syria) after the capture of Baghdad in 1258. The orthodox institution was eclipsed under the rule of the heathen princes, and though it gradually revived in the following century its social and political foundations were too weak to allow it to recover its former influence. Its function of maintaining the unity of the Community thus passed to the Sūfi movement in new and difficult circumstances. This fact itself determined that the Sūfi methods of operation would differ from those of the orthodox institution, but was also in keeping with their own historical origins. In contrast to the orthodox institution, the Sūfi movement was based on popular appeal, and its new structure of religious unity was built on popular foundations. It would be difficult to prove (or even to imagine) that the Sūfi leaders consciously formulated a plan of action, and the result was achieved in a manner which gives the impression of spontaneous action initiated independently and almost simultaneously in both eastern and western lands of Islam.

This development arose out of two cardinal elements in Sufism: the close personal relation between the Sufi shaikh and his disciples, and its missionary spirit. Whereas in the early centuries, the Sufi circles were individual and dispersed units, the loose proliferation of individual activities was now replaced by more organized structures. Regular colleges were founded, with the aid of benefactions and alms, by particular shaikhs, who commissioned their leading disciples, after training in the special rites and rules of the "order," to organize daughter colleges in other centers and regions, and these maintained a close association with the original college and the successors of its founder.

Such networks of affiliated colleges and convents constituted a "path" (tariqa). Their function was not only to train initiates but to serve as centers of religious instruction and spiritual influence among the general population, who were associated with the order as "lay members." At some stage, not yet definitely established, lay membership was integrated with the guild organizations of artisans and other professions, each guild or corporation being affiliated to a particular tariqa, and extended also to village and tribal areas. While many tariqas had only local importance, the greater orders (such as the Qadiri, Shadhili, and Suhrawardi) spread over the whole or a large part of Islamic territory. Thus they contributed, even more effectively than the orthodox institution (but at the same time building upon the foundations laid in earlier centuries by the common authority of the Shari'ah) to maintain the ideal unity of all Muslims, in spite of a very few Shi'ite fariqas and of deviation from strict orthodoxy among the initiates of some more extreme orders.

It was not only the physical expansion of the great tariqas, however, that served the cause of unity. Teachers and disciples journeyed from end to end of the Muslim world, bearing the seeds of interchange and cross-fertilization within the Sufi framework. While this had been a characteristic of Islamic culture from the early centuries, its importance was now immensely increased. One consequence of the Turkish immigrations and Mongol invasions was to harden the division of the Muslim lands into separate Arabic, Persian and Turkish linguistic regions, between which literary intercommunication was confined to restricted circles of the educated. Although the effects of this division can be seen also in the distribution of the tariqas, the activities of the Sufi teachers did much to counteract them by furnishing a means for the transference of ideas across linguistic frontiers and guiding their further development on parallel lines.

How effective the communication of ideas was between the initiates in every region is strikingly shown by a development which was to prove of decisive significance for the future cultural action and influence of Sufism—the evolution of its own intellectual system and literature. In its pure essence, Sufism, being a personal religious
attitude emphasizing intuitive experience against rational knowledge, could in so far as it added to or diverged from the *Shari‘ah* basis of Islam, present no common body of doctrine. But it was inevitable that as institutional forms developed with organized teaching certain doctrinal tendencies should crystallize within them. The general trend was towards pantheism; but in the major orders these tendencies were stabilized in one or other of two related philosophies. One was illuminationist, deriving ultimately from Asiatic gnosticism and systematized by Yahyā al-Suhrawardī; the other was monist, deriving from popular Hellenistic philosophy (probably through the Fatimid literature), and expounded by the Spanish Arab Muḥyī‘l-dīn Ḥbn al-‘Arabī. The former was widely disseminated in the eastern provinces; the latter at first in the Arabic and Turkish orders, but later also in the East.

The intellectual consequences of this were extremely grave. Instead of revitalizing the inert matter of scholastic instruction in the *madrasas*, it drew intellectual energies off into subjective and antirational speculation, leaving the former more inert than ever and supplying no rigorous intellectual discipline in its place. On the other hand—emphasizing the social function of Sufism as an expression of cultural unity—these mystical institutions and adumbrations were enshrined in a new poetical literature, which utilized popular literary forms (wine-songs, love-songs, romances, apoloques) and transposed or transformed their imagery into religious symbolism. These productions, spread over all the Muslim world, in Arabic, Persian, or Turkish, were appreciated by all classes and for several centuries all but monopolized literary and aesthetic creation. The greater part of prose literature followed in their wake, furnishing in its higher ranges commentaries (in the true scholastic tradition) on the works of the masters and their successors or on the great Persian poems, and in its lower ranges lives and legends of saints and other devotional works.

Finally the Sūfī movement, in spite of its original quietism and pacifism, took too firm root in the social organization of the Muslim peoples not to have also political effects. Especially in regions, such as Persia and Anatolia after the collapse of Mongol rule, where centralized political institutions had broken down by dynastic disruption of nomadization, the Sūfī brotherhood was often the only form of social organization left. It naturally served, in consequence, as the basis of association for self-defense against the violence of local tyrants or tribesmen, and in favorable conditions developed into a fighting force, emulating the achievements of the primitive Muslim armies 


path of God." The inner history of northern Persia in the 14th and 15th centuries is obscure, but it seems probable that most political movements had Sufi affiliations of some kind. In contemporary Anatolia, the town artisans were organized in akhī guilds, the tribal revolts led by Sufī shaikhs, and most of the small principalities were "ghāzi states," devoted to war against the infidel and organized in corporations led by amīrs but frequently, if not in all cases, associated with a Sufī tariqa. Of the two great empires which were to divide Western Asia between them until the 20th century, it has been shown fairly conclusively that the Ottoman Empire began as such a "ghāzi state," and there is no question that its rival the Safavid kingdom of Persia, was created by the shaikhs of the Safavi suborder of the Suhrawardī tariqa.

Thus through the influence and activity of Sufism the Islamic world was entirely transformed from the 13th century onwards—spiritually, morally, intellectually, imaginatively, and even politically—and only the orthodox madrasas preserved a tenuous link with the cultural tradition of medieval Islam.

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