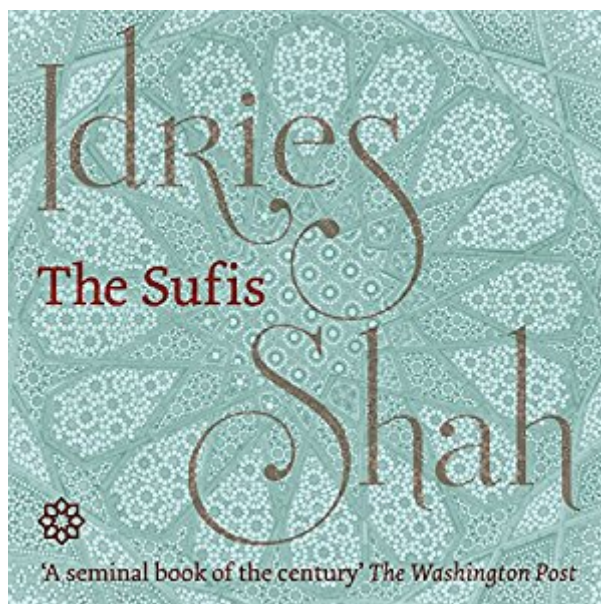


The book was found

# The Sufis



## Synopsis

When it first appeared in 1964, *The Sufis* was welcomed as the decisive work on the subject of Sufi thought. Rich in scope, author Idries Shah explained clearly the traditions and philosophy of the Sufis to a Western audience for the first time. In the five decades since its release, the book has been translated into more than two dozen languages, and has found a wide readership in both East and West. Containing detailed information on the major Sufi thinkers, and literary characters, such as Nasrudin, it is regarded as a key work on both Sufism and Eastern Philosophy. A text in scores of leading universities around the world for courses on Sufism, Eastern thought, and Islamic philosophy, *The Sufis* has been used by psychologists and physicists, by school teachers, lawyers, social workers, and by ordinary members of the public.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Terry W. Williams, Ph.D., Del Mar, CA. Idries Shah's *The Sufis*, first published in 1964, is the seminal work of this famous Afghan author and a first-of-its-kind modern statement on Sufism. A famous Sufi once said, "Previously Sufism was a reality without a name. Now it's a name without a reality." One meaning of this saying is that there was a time when the science and procedures of learning the meaning of mankind's existence were clearly understood and formed an essential part of human life. However, that meaning has been lost by humanity and only the name remains. In *The Sufis*, Idries Shah has made a monumental contribution to bringing this precious meaning back into the life stream of humanity. This book, written after years of travel, research, and collection of an amazingly diverse array of materials, presents the reader with a series of startling revelations

concerning the basis of the knowledge structure of Western and Eastern thought. The idea of an advanced knowledge in the custody of, for the most part, unknown and mysterious people with strange powers, may seem at first glance to be an absurdity. The idea that the unified knowledge of the Sufis concerning the developmental and evolutionary potential of mankind influenced or lay behind the organization and theories such as those of Chivalry, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila, Roger Bacon, Geber, Hindu Vendantist teachings, the Troubadours, in Shakespeare, the Rosicrucians, the techniques of Japanese Zen, in Chaucer - to name only a few - is sure to clash with the conditioned thinking inculcated by submersion in conventional thought and maintained by our environment. In the book, Shah states: "Sufism, in one definition, is human life.

Through lack of information, misunderstanding and cultural prejudice, the words 'Sufi' and 'dervish' have acquired strange associations in the West, where they're likely to conjure up images of wild-eyed ragamuffins or whirling fanatics. Idries Shah's compelling book THE SUFIS shows this to be not only erroneous but unfortunate, because the world into which it gives a tantalizing glimpse is one of unsuspected sophistication, breadth and relevance to the human condition. With deft scholarship and eloquent prose, Shah shows Sufism to be nothing like what one might expect - not a religious cult, nor a political movement, nor a collection of vague-minded idealists. Instead it emerges as a body of men and women who see themselves as engaged in the practical task of unlocking the hidden potential of the human being and guiding it to completion, both on an individual and a societal level. The way in which they do this, they say, is tailored to local needs and conditions and thus varies from epoch to epoch and from culture to culture, as well as from individual to individual - something that has confused scholars no end and given rise to much misunderstanding. This has been exacerbated by a profusion of imitators, many of them well-meaning but misguided. Sufism seems to have achieved an understanding of the human mind that goes far beyond that of modern psychology, many of whose tenets - e.g., conditioning and the unconscious - it anticipated by centuries. Its influence on the world has been enormous, though not widely known. In the West alone, Sufism lies behind a host of diverse cultural heirlooms, ranging from Freemasonry to alchemy to the Kabala, and had a profound impact on such thinkers as Roger Bacon, Paracelsus and St. Francis of Assisi.

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