

## **Sufi Dance & Body Movements – Literature Review & Filmography**

### **Honors Project**

When one attempts to review literature regarding Sufi dances or body movements a number of issues present themselves. The emic texts I read emphasized proper adab, (ethical conduct), focusing of mental and spiritual powers and occasionally breathing techniques. All of the above are more important than body movements, to which little attention paid. There is a whole genre of manuals devoted to spiritual practices of the Sufis, with barely mentioning one's body. It seemed that in the task of remembrance of G-d (zhikr) it is not worthy to talk about how one should hold himself.

By "emic text" above, I primarily refer to the texts produced by Sufis throughout the centuries. Unfortunately I do not read Arabic (or Persian or Urdu) thus I couldn't study the primary texts in their original language. However it is clear from the translations that the emphasis is on inner dimensions. For example most of the aforementioned manuals speak of the zhikr (and of the Sufi's path) consisting of stages. However the definitions of these stages are rarely outlined in physical terms but in relation to the progress of "remembering G-d", uniting with G-d" or "forgetting oneself". In this context it would be counterproductive to point out how the body should move, because that's exactly what they hope to forget, their bodily experience.

The primary written sources I studied all stressed the importance of the belief system being based on the Qur'an and working within the Islamic framework. This has to do with the authors' efforts to legitimize their practices. A quantitative analysis of the texts would show that

any of the following topics take up more space than the movements: the preparation for the dhikr (with physical and mental cleansing, ablution), the direction of the mind's focus, the respect and attention paid to the shaykh, the following of the divine law (shari'a), etiquette (adab)...

Another way to describe the relative insignificance of dance amongst Sufis is to point out that they were and are divided whether the zhikr should be done silently (khafi) or aloud (jail). Amongst those who consent to sounds, some approve playing music along, but not all. Music allowed only for the purpose of helping devotion and not for carnal pleasure. Finally, only a segment of those who endorse listening to music approve of dancing. This was the impression I got from the written sources.

The groups where motion is sanctified can be further classified. The less text based, orders, tariqa-s, where the methods for attaining fana (sense of self-annihilation) are just as important, are by definition represented to a lesser extent in literature. For example members of both the Kurdish Casnazani and the Macedonian Rifai brotherhoods practice bodily asceticism with the help of skewers, swords, blades, but the written information on them in English is rarer.

The most well-known and well-documented "dancing" order is the Mevlevi from Konya. This paper will not attempt to provide a detailed picture of them, because of the wealth of available material. However I would like to point out that part of the reason for their popularity in Western culture is that their movements (and dresses and overall symbolism) visually pleasing (and exotic) for the occidental eye. They would not refer to their movements as dance, because that would assume that they perform this for pleasure. Their real intent is spiritual gain, connection.

This is the main difference between the emic and etic understanding of Sufi dance. The most ethnocentric, early Western descriptions thought of the "whirling dervishes" as crazy

pagans. Later the understanding shifted based on the assumption that the Sufis dance to achieve trance, spiritual high. But the Sufis themselves look at the **trance** "only" as a tool to practice religion and its highest order of uniting with G-d.

This distinction is more important than a source being primary, secondary or tertiary. There are Western scholars in both camps who look at the Sufi dance either way. The majority of the Orientalists, from the colonial period, followed the outsiders' view. For them observing and describing the dance/trance aspect was more important than trying to understand its meaning from the inside. [My French is limited therefore I did not attempt to read text in that language, but noticed that there are more texts in French than in English directly dealing with Sufi dance. The reason for that is that a large portion of the Arab world, where the corresponding Sufi orders existed, was under French rule.] When observing Sufis they were focusing on their outward behavior and attempting to understand them through that. Furthermore early explorers were fascinated with the "exotic", i.e. different customs of the dervishes.

On the surface this prevailing interest was reflected in the proportions of the attached filmography. Most of them included segments or were entirely devoted to the Mevlevi order, whose dance was the most spectacular. In comparison there was little footage of other orders' practices that might not show as well on film, but spiritually and theologically just as important for the practitioners. This came through as if the filmmakers--compared to the authors of written works--would be more interested in the exoteric than the esoteric forms. This may not be necessarily true, just a characteristic of the type of media they work with. In movies you have to show enticing visuals to keep the audience's attention. In writing however you have the option to tell the reader what the figures think, which is difficult to capture on film.

Therefore all the movies I watched included narration. Showing the dances just in themselves, without providing context, would not have revealed enough about the inner dimensions of the acts for the average viewer. The quality of the narration varied. Helminski's introduction and Chelebi's closing words of the *The Whirling Dervishes of Turkey* were the most precise and informative. Furthermore they didn't interrupt the experience of watching the ritual, shown in its entire length. On the other hand the narration of the *Sema of Peace, Sacred Dance of the Whirling Dervishes* was more poetic. But it provided less precise content and interfered with the movie (that was a heavily cut and shortened version of a zhikr.) This movie was undoubtedly made for the American market, with its shorter cuts, egalitarian participation, US shooting location. *Secret Egypt's* narration was done by a Gabrielle Roth, who is a dancer. This video was produced by a company that's products are targeted to the New Age market. The narration therefore was even hazier and more poetic, with plenty of Rumi translations and little explanation of what's going on the scene.

In the bibliography I did not strive for completeness; instead introduced as many different type of resources as possible, including webpages, novels, scholarly articles, non-fiction books, picture books... On the other hand I did include every movie I found and deemed relevant in the filmography. Relevancy was measured by whether the movie includes Sufis dancing.

I didn't follow any particular convention regarding the spelling of non-English terms in the Bibliography and Filmography. For the annotation of the former I opted to follow whatever the particular resource was using. After having read the resources I wrote all the annotations, except where otherwise noted: a few cases I took the summary text form the book cover. For the four films I managed to watch (out of the 35) I wrote the annotation, while for the others I copied

or paraphrased from the webpage mentioning it. For each of those I provided the webaddress, where in most cases the movies can be also ordered.

Watching these videos and reading these texts made me realize that etic description can be categorized several ways. Some of them are specifically written by people trained in Western dance. Others take the anthropological/ethnographical approach and try to understand it as an indigenous culture. While the emic view is more coherent, always focusing on the relevance of G-d. Emically Sufi dance is a way of relating to G-d, while etically it is of relating to space and other humans.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**Algar, Hamid. "Devotional Practices of the Khalidi Naqshbandis of Ottoman Turkey." The Dervish lodge: Architecture, Art, and Sufism in Ottoman Turkey. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1992.**

The article starts off with the antecedents and formulation of the order and ends with their tekke (lodge), but the main part is about the practices themselves. Emphasis is on the spiritual and textual aspects, particularly what distinguishes this order from the others: the rabita, "the linking of one's heart to a being, both perfect and perfection-bestowing" (p. 217), in other words the shaykh. The only description of body position is how the novice should position himself at the initiation ceremony: "The initiate is instructed to sit facing the shaykh, with his left foot arched so that the toes touch the ground and his right foot folded beneath him (a posture known as tawarruk)." (p. 214)

**Douglas-Klotz, Neil. "The Key in the Dark: Self and Soul Transformation in the Sufi Tradition." Modern Psychology and Ancient Wisdom: An Anthology of Healing Practices from the World's Religious Traditions. New York: Haworth Press. 2002.**

"This article aims to show how psycho-spiritual theory and practice from the Sufi tradition can inform a person's psychological healing and soul journey." The author accomplishes it by providing a psychological analysis of Sufi poetry, concept of soul and practices. He also attempts to provide a brief background and potential "applications of some of these practices to Western psychotherapy and other integrative health models." He devotes three separate sections to Walking Meditation, Dance, and Whirling and the Sema. All of them are based on Samuel Lewis' modifications to traditional practice and here are described in terms of how it relates to breathing and awareness. No specific ways of moving was mentioned.

**Feild, Reshad. The last barrier. New York: Harper & Row. 1976.**

It is a fictionalized autobiography of a British man who got acquainted and eventually trained by the shaykh of the Mevlevi order in Konya. The book is an enjoyable read of the process from his very first encounter until he moved to Turkey, giving up his previous life in London. On page 149 he is told: "Now you must learn to pick up the right foot so that it comes behind the left leg and then you put it down the other side of the leg. It is as though your body turns to where you put your foot. But it is difficult, and will take you much time to learn." We learn his mental and physical struggle to master the inside and outside motions.

**Friedlander, Ira. The whirling dervishes : being an account of the Sufi order, known as the Mevlevis, and its founder, the poet and mystic, Mevlana Jalalu'ddin Rumi. New York: Macmillan. 1975.**

This richly illustrated volume includes hundreds of pictures, mostly black and white photographs; the vast majority of those are depicting dancers. One of the eight chapters' deals with the "Whirling Dervish Ceremony", the rest describes the Sufis, the order, the founder, the music, and the lodge. The twenty page section includes earlier accounts, such as Miss Pardoe's from 1836, but is mostly written by Ms. Friedlander in a poetic language from an insider's point of view. It covers the dancers' movement limb-by-limb, along with the general organization of the space, the music and the musicians with special attention to what the participants pay special attention to.

**Gdula, Kimberly. Perfect Circles. September 2001. Dance Spirit Magazine. 6 June 2005. < <http://www.dancespirit.com/backissues/sep01/worldstage.shtml> >**

It is an informative summary of the "turning" movement of the Mevlevi order, based on Kabir Helminski's words. The article includes a brief theological introduction, the process of

how practitioners train, the steps/body movements themselves, the structure of the Sema, and issues related to the performing spaces and intercultural dimensions.

**Hoffman, Valerie J. "Bringing the World to the Classroom . . . Ritual, Music, Sociability and Censure: Making a film on Sufi 'dhikr' in Egypt." Journal of Religion and Film. 2. 1 (1998) < <http://www.unomaha.edu/jrf/hoffmans.htm> >**

The filmmaker, an associate professor of religion at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign, shares the process of making the movie including the technical, financial, legal and logistical challenges.

**Huda, Qamar-ul. Striving for divine union: spiritual exercises for Suhrawardi Sufis. London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon. 2003.**

The official summary: "this book examines the theological, philosophical, and Islamic mystical dimensions of the celebrated Suhrawardi order from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. The Suhrawardis were a legally grounded and intellectually vibrant Sufi order whose mystical path was based on exchanged and debates on the Qur'an and on the Prophet's customs." Chapter one investigates Shaikh al-Suhrawardi's political career, chapter two his religious and cultural attitudes. Chapter three is about the order's eastward expansion, while chapter four "concentrates on the ways in which Suhrawardi tasawwuf consisted of symbolic meaning that communicated an aspect of their spiritual belief. The closing, fifth chapter describes their concrete spiritual exercises. Body movements are mentioned only to a limited extent, and mostly in the last chapter. "The movement of the forehead back and forth to the ground [in kneeling position] with the rest of the outer body in prostration allows the heart to simultaneously prostrate to G-d and prepare a clean purified place for His presence." (p. 157) Various dhikr-s are described later, but only in terms of actions of the mind and heart but not the body.

**Lewis, Samuel L. Spiritual Dance and Walk: an Introduction from the Work of Murshid Samuel L. Lewis. San Francisco: Sufi Islamia/Prophecy Publications. 1983.**

**Maier, John. "Silence & Ecstasy: Watching Sufis Dance." Journal of Ritual Studies 4.1 1990. 41-65**

**Michon, Jean-Louis. "The Spiritual Practices of Sufism." Islamic Spirituality. New York: Crossroad. 1991: 265-294**

This is a comprehensive article covering the theological and historical backgrounds, the social elements (initiation, the spiritual masters' roles, meetings, the good company), and spiritual practices (invocation, wird, hymns...) Three pages are devoted to "The Sacred Dance" in this context. Most of it is relating to the Mawlawi practice, describing not just the movements, but their symbolic significance too.

**Moore, James. The Whirling Dervishes: a Commemoration. London: International Rumi Committee. 1974.**

This big format booklet contains lots of pictures and four short essays on Rumi and the Mevlevi order, music, and ceremony. This last one by Jeffrey Somers covers on two pages the basic elements and symbolism of the dhikr as practiced by the order. The real value of the booklet is the large and colorful pictures of both the dancers and their surroundings.

**Netton, Ian Richard. Sufi ritual: the parallel universe. Richmond, England: Curzon Press, 2000.**

"[The book] examines the rituals and practices of the [Nimatullahi and Naqshbandi] orders and surveys their organisation and hierarchy, initiation ceremonies, and aspects of their liturgy such as dhikr and sama." Regarding the former order we are told: "A specific posture is to be adopted which stresses in symbolic form the nothingness of the Sufi and the latter's rejection

of the ego." (p. 36) However all we learn about the posture is that "the arms and legs form the Arabic word "la" ('no' or 'not')." (p.36) In reference to the body's position during Naqshbandi order's ritual we only learn how the word of prayer/thought should travel through the body: from the brain to the navel, through the right and then left shoulder. (p. 80.) However no reference is made whether the body should move during this or any other prayer, ritual.

**Resources on Sema. 6 June 2005. < <http://www.sufism.org/society/sema.html> >**

The Threshold Society's site includes dozens of articles and webpages related to the Sema/Zhikr, but this one collects the 5 most useful ones. Camille Helminski's "The Sema Ceremony" is an easy to follow, illustrated, step-by-step (slide-by-slide) description.

**Sufi Cinema. 6 June 2005. < <http://www.suficinema.com/> >**

"Sufi Cinema is the online video zone of the discourse of the most distinguished Naqshbandi Order of Sufis, the head of which is Maulana Sheikh Nazim al Haqqani." The site contains over 30 videos viewable online. Most of them are lectures given by Naqshbandi shaykhs. More than a dozen of the films can be purchased on VCD format.

**UNC Films on Sufism and Saints. 6 June 2005. <**

**<http://www.unc.edu/depts/sufilit/suffilms.htm> >**

It is an annotated list of 14 films available from The Ellen-Fairbanks D. Bodman Collection of Middle Eastern and Islamic World Films at the University of North Carolina.

**Valiuddin, Mir. Contemplative disciplines in Sufism. London: East-West Publication, 1980.**

Mr. Valiuddin (d. 1975) translated vast amount of Sufi texts from Arabic, Persian and Urdu, into English. This compilation was published after his death and is describing the practices of the Qadiriyya, Naqshbandiyya, and Chishtiyya orders in 8 chapters. Dance as such is not

mentioned in it explicitly, but he described the required body postures along the lines of how and what to do at various rituals and prayers. In the author's understanding the Qadiriyya order puts the emphasis on emptying of the "Sirr", the Naqshbandiyya order on Contemplation, and the Chishtiyya order on love of G-d. Here is a brief summary of the chapters with special emphasis on what he writes about body motion.

I. Purification of the Self: topics included the salik/traveler; sirr/secret; organ of spiritual apprehension; 'nafs', cleansing and attributes (slavery to carnal desires, hypocrisy, dissimulation (riya), obstinacy against G-d (uluhiyya), parsimony.)

II. Cleansing of the Heart: detachment from everything, guidance of the shaykh; dhikr – constant remembrance.

III. Dhikr and Prayer: repetition of name, breathe regulation, recitation, combination

IV. Methods of Dhikr: The Qadiriyya and Naqshbandiyya Orders: dhikr jail (loud), dhikr khafi (silent.) Qadiriyya: "the dhakir (the devotee who is performing the dhikr) should sit with flexed knees, as in the posture of prayer, facing the Qibla [...] and should close his eyes. He should say the word La drawing the sound as from his navel; pull it up to his shoulders..." (p. 51) Dhikr with one darb (or stroke) or two, three, four. Naqshbandiyya: "There should be no movement of the body." Mindful of breathing, holding it (p. 61) tongue, mind and heart movements.

V. Methods of Dhikr: the Chishtiyya Order: "The seeker should sit with folded knees, or sit squarer, and face the Qible [...], he should sit erect, close his eyes and place both hands on his knees. If he sits square, he should hold the kimas or the vein of the left leg with the toe of the right leg. This posture tends to increase warmth in the heart and dispel evil insinuations. It also dissolves the fat around the heart." (76) The various stages mention movements that the devotee

will feel in his organs, but doesn't specify it which direction the body moves. Instead how the devotee should relate to this autonomous, continuous and discontinuous motion coming from the G-d. (page 87-91)

VI. Emptying of the Sirr: necessary after cleansing the heart, towards the Haqq Qadiriyya: 13 types of Contemplation, mostly on Koranic verses regarding G-d's names and attributes. Last one for "composure and peace of mind" has elements on how, what kind of posture to say the prayer. Chishtiyya: 11 similar contemplations with instructions what to do with eyes.

VII. Emptying of the Sirr: Contemplation of the Naqshabandiyya Order: "Suspend the breathing under the navel for a time and then, making full use of perceptive faculties, they concentrate their attention on the simple, abstract and comprehensive meaning of the word Allah." Page 109) 5 stages of contemplation: "effacement in Divine Action, effacement in Divine Attributes, effacement in Divine Essence, effacement of Effacement, abiding after effacement. (p 113)

VIII. Illumination of the Spirit (Tajliya-i-Ruh): "filling of the human spirit with the effulgence of the Vision of G-d and the fervor of His love." (p.137)

**Werbner, Pnina. "Stamping the Earth with the Name of Allah: Zikr and the Sacralizing of Space among British Muslims." Cultural Anthropology 11.3 1996: 309-338**

The article's main focus is how and why Pakistani and other Asian immigrants (re-)created their sacred space in Britain. The flow of people by this "reverse colonization" created the need for sacralizing the space. The author argues that regional cults have been formed (as opposed to transnational orders, tariqas), and is describing one example in detail, the community of Manchester. New and old festivals are celebrated en mess most often accompanies by masses

chanting zikr. Mr. Pnina limits her understanding of zhikr to chanting, but at the same time explains how the devotees proceed for the rhythm on the streets. She is not interested in their movements only how they use and create mental constructs of their new space.

## **FILMOGRAPHY**

### **Al-Tannoura. Directed by: Hani Fakhouri. 27 min. 1995.**

The religious ritual dance of the Sufi order of the Mevlevi dervishes of Turkey diffused to Egypt in the 13th century. Today it is found transformed into a folk artistic performance seen at public festivals as well as at international conferences.

### **Askilar: Those Who Are In Love. Directed by David Grabias. 38 min. 1995.**

The tradition of the asik, the Shi'a Alevi wandering minstrels who sing of love for humanity accompanying them on the saz, is almost extinct now in Turkey. The filmmaker roams through villages, interviewing old men - and one woman - who reminisce about their devotion to their saz, never played for money but always for the love of God and others. Insightful examination of Sufi practice. Turkish with English subtitles.

### **Basant. Directed by Yousuf Saeed. 13 min. 1998.**

A short film documenting a day in the life of Sufis and Qawwals at the tomb of Nizamuddin, celebrating Basant (traditional spring).

Further information: <http://www.alif-india.com/peacemedia.html>

### **Bayt-al-Deen Revisited (AKA Durus al-Qalb). Produced by Abdullak Nouri and Charles White. 33 min.**

Bayt-al-Deen is a prototype madrassah [Qur'anic school] near San Antonio, Texas, with much of the teaching in English conducted by Shaykh Fadhlalla. This film offers an overview of the 140-acre institution, farming, family life together with vignettes of a 'Id al Adha conference, salat [prayer], and one scene of a Sufi zikr [ritual of ecstasy]. Produced for the American Academy of Qur'anic Studies.

**Beaming One (Bahauddin Naqshband). Directed by Shuukhrat Makkhmodov. 19 min.**

Dedicated to the 675th anniversary, this eulogy of Khayrat Bahauddin Nakshband born in 1318 recreates moments from his life in the spectacular setting of Bokhara, quoting his adage that 'the soul should belong to Allah, the hands to work.' One sequence addresses his Quiet Zikr; there is reference to the expansion of his brotherhood to 20 million today, of which a million are in Turkey. Produced by Ibragim Ahmodov. Ozma Productions for the Foreign Trade Association, City of Bokhara.

**Celebrating The Prophet In The Remembrance Of God: Sufi Dhikr In Egypt.**  
**Produced by Valerie J. Hoffman. 39 min. 1997.**

Study of an Islamic mystical exercise that has evolved into a major communal ritual with important spiritual, social and psychological functions. Sufi dhikr, the chanting of the names of God, is a regular activity in the lives of many Muslims, particularly those who live in urban areas and villages that are home to the shrine-tombs of important saints. In Egypt, communal dhikr is performed to the accompaniment of music and song, and the film explains the interaction of music with excerpts from performances by several Sufi singers. It also examines the influence of social setting on dhikr, and such issues as the participation of women and children and the function of dhikr as entertainment.

**Dergahta Sema - Mevlevi Rite in Dergah. Produced by Ahmet Çalisir.**

Sema in the Dergah is a Sema ceremony recorded in the turbeh of Hz.Mevlana (Konya Asitane). This is the first and only record made in the turbeh of Mevlana after the dervish lodge was closed. The Mevlevi Ceremony performed in this DVD is a Hicazkar Mevlevi Ceremony (a

reciting tone in Classical Turkish Music) that was composed by Hafiz Ahmet Calisir. During the ceremony the explanations of each part are made.

Further information: <http://www.lesartsturcs.org/productinfo.php?id=909>

**Diya in the Dargah. Directed by Trisha Das. 30 min. 2003.**

A film about a certain dargah (sufi shrine) in Baroda, Gujarat, which is managed by a Brahmin, who is equally welcomed in his own Hindu community as easily as amongst the Muslims. This film was shot after the Gujarat carnage of 2002.

**Forever Haqqani and the Whirling Dervishes. 30 min. 2002.**

Recorded at the Glastonbury International Dance Festival. This is not the traditional Sema of the Mevlevi Order but one that has been made suitable for today's audience and potential devotees of Sufism, under the authority of most distinguished Grand Master of Sufism, Sheikh Nazim al Haqqani. There are at least nine band members in the South Wales based group 'Forever Haqqani'; cello; flute; saxophones; guitars; tabla; drums; keyboards plus a host of support guest vocalists, the latter providing deep masculine Arabic chanting which made a refreshing change to the mainly female vocals and made the whirlers seem slightly more comfortable in this unusual but pioneering setting.

Further information: <http://www.suficinema.com/fh02.htm>

**Five Masters of Meditation. Produced by Emily Squires. 42 min. 2002**

In this quiet program, filmed in 2000, the central message of oneness, of universal commonality and of the great strength discovered through shared meditation is critical for our day. The five speakers provide practical advice from their diverse faith traditions on successful meditation techniques. One of the fives is Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan, Sufi leader and author

Further information: [http://www.hartleyfoundation.org/meditation\\_masters.htm](http://www.hartleyfoundation.org/meditation_masters.htm)

**For Those Who Sail to Heaven. Directed by Elizabeth Wickett. 48 min.**

This splendid study of the moulid (festival) of Abu'l Hajjaj which is held annually in Luxor[Egypt] not only offers personal involvement in the rites, but stresses the ecumenical participation which has evolved. The content is enriched by clips from the films made by Henry Barnes of the same festival in 1925.

**Al-Ghazali, The Alchemist of Happiness. Directed by Ovidio Salazar. 2000.**

Exploring the life and impact of the greatest spiritual and legal philosopher in Islamic history, this film examines Ghazali's existential crisis of faith that arose from his rejection of religious fanaticism, and reveals profound parallels with our own times. Ghazali became known as the Proof of Islam and his path of love and spiritual excellence overcame the pitfalls of the organised religion of his day. His path was largely abandoned by early 20th century Muslim reformers for the more strident and less tolerant school of Ibn Taymiyya. This film argues that Ghazali's Islam is the antidote for today's terror.

Further information: <http://www.matmedia.org/films.htm>

**Habiba: A Sufi Saint from Uzbekistan**

Habiba is a Tabib, a Muslim healer, who belongs to the earliest Sufi "Chain of Mystic Transmission," a lineage of teachers whose main representative is the great master Bahaudin Nacksband. Uzbekistan is a dreamlike land of turquoise domes and minarets, a crossroad of western and eastern civilization along the Silk Road. A Muslim country: its spiritual tradition derives from the teachings of all the great religions of the earth.

Further information: [http://www.mysticfire.com/frmst\\_single.html?sku=76403](http://www.mysticfire.com/frmst_single.html?sku=76403)

**Hadrah Ziyarah Rasul (S) Ramadan 2004.**

Historically the Naqshbandi order of Sufis are perhaps least known among all Sufi paths to practice hadrah as one of their spiritual exercises. Naqshbandis are traditionally identified more with their silent dhikr and muraqaba or meditation. To the best of our knowledge, the featured event was the very first Naqshbandi hadrah in North America.

Further information: <http://www.isn1.net/33-0004.html>

**Hideous Kinky. Directed by Gillies MacKinnon. 98 min. 1998**

The movie is based on the semi-autobiographical novel of Esther Freud of her years spent in Morocco in the 1970s. A segment of the film deals with the protagonist's attempt to become a Sufi in a monastery.

Further information: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0136244/>

**I am a Sufi, I am a Muslim. 54 min. 1994.**

Documentary shot on five locations with at least five different type of Sufi order/experience: at the tomb of Shah Husayn in Lahore, Pakistan; an Eid (feast of Sacrifice) at Saykh Hujwiri's Tomb in Lahore; a zikr of the Naqshbandi Order I Pakistan, Shah Dawla's Shrine in Punjab with women pilgrims; Nevruz with body piercing at the Rifai Brotherhood's Tekke (lodge) in Macedonia, Sama at the Mevlevi Brotherhood in Turkey; Urs celebration of Nuri Buri with qawwali artists, including Nusrate Fateh Ali Khan.

**Inner Life (Traditional World of Islam #6). 30 min.**

It addresses certain aspects of Sufism - the mystical aspect of Islam - the quest for spiritual union with God. Worship at saints' shrines, retreats for ascetics, ritual chanting and whirling dervishes all exemplify different paths towards one goal. Lacking is any example of lay Sufism integrated into society, the personal rather than communal practices.

**Islamic Mysticism: The Sufi Way. Directed by Irving and Elda Hartley. 30 min.**

**1979.**

Shot in magnificent Islamic architectural settings from Morocco to Turkey to India, Islamic Mysticism: The Sufi Way provides a window into the rigorous Sufi schedule of prayer, fasting and study. Professor Huston Smith, renowned scholar of world religions and author of A History of Man, adds commentary as the camera takes an in-depth look at this gentle, mystical branch of Islam.

Further information: [http://www.hartleyfoundation.org/Sufi\\_Way.htm](http://www.hartleyfoundation.org/Sufi_Way.htm)

**Kitte Mil Ve Mahi - Where The Twain Shall Meet. 72 min.**

Documentary on the spirituality of the caretakers of Sufi shrines in Punjab belonging to the Dalit caste. Punjabi with English subtitles.

Further information: <http://www.usenetculture.com/archive/index.php/t-400236.html>

**Master Musicians of Jahjouka. Directed by Mendizza/Schuyler. 62 min.**

This visually striking documentary preserves the rich musical heritage of Jahjouka, a remote Moroccan village south of Meknes. The lame, barren and mentally ill came to seek cures by listening to the music which had association with the local saint's tomb, music believed to have special baraka - blessing power. The film studies the impact on the villagers and the music in the 1960's when Westerners such as the Rolling Stones rock musician Brian Jones, counter-culture figure Timothy Leary and author Paul Bowles arrived with followers.

**Mystical Poetry in Islam. Dr. Annemarie Schimmel. 60 min.**

An authority on Sufism, Professor Schimmel, German Islamic scholar, discusses mysticism and poetry in Islam.

Further information: <http://onlineislamicstore.com/a3891.html>

**A Niche in the Lamp. Directed by Girish Karnad. 40 min.**

It is a documentary film that surveys the history and current state of Sufi and Bhakti movements in India, depicting the living traditions of both in various parts of India.

**Remembering Hajjah Anne**

Documentary on the woman who immigrated from Communist Russia to Turkey and after she got married to Shaykh Nazim of the Naqshbandi order they settled in Cyprus.

Further information: <http://www.isn1.net/33-0006.html>

**Rumi: Poet of the Heart. Directed by Haydn Reiss. 58 min. 1998.**

Coleman Barks, the preeminent contemporary translator of Rumi's poetry, Robert Bly, Deepak Chopra, Michael Meade, Huston Smith and others celebrate the earthy, joyous spiritual passion of Rumi's poetry. The film includes performances, readings, illustrations, music and footage of the whirling dervishes woven together to serve as an introduction to Rumi and the story of his growing reputation in the West.

Further information: <http://www.hartleyfoundation.org/Rumi.htm>

**Rumi - The Wings of Love. Directed by Shems Friedlander. 34 min.**

This video takes viewers into a secret world rarely seen by outsiders. Nearly eight centuries after his death, Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi, Sufi master and mystical poet, is ever-present in the whirling ceremony of today's Mevlevi dervishes. Rumi "existed outside the differences which divide men." In this extraordinary video, Rumi's universal words and essence are seamlessly interwoven with his history and story of awakening.

Further information: <http://www.heartheworld.org>

**Sacred Sounds: Music of the World, Songs of the Soul. 58 min.**

To comprehend the holy and inspire the believer, the world's religions have always incorporated music as a form of prayer. This award-winning documentary takes an ecumenical look at a diverse selection of these traditions as performed at the Festival of World Sacred Music held in Fez, Morocco. Along with commentary from festival director Dr. Faouzi Skali and music anthropologist David Lynch, the program features dynamic performances from the Christian, Islamic, and Jewish traditions, including medieval chants, Sufi blessing songs, American gospel, and Israeli popular ballads.

Further information: <http://www.films.com/id/5310>

**Saints and Spirits. Directed by Elizabeth Warnock Fernea. 26 min.**

The relationship of the individual to the super-natural through mediating influences is an aspect of Islam often ignored in orthodox literature and films. Here three such personal dimensions are explored through the experiences of one woman in Marrakech, Morocco. The indigenous music and sensitive narration compensate for the technically uneven footage. Detailed background for this film is essential for student understanding and appreciation; it is ably provided by the accompanying guide. Granada TV.

**La Sama, Danse Mystique des dervishes. 20 min.**

This careful, beautifully photographed study of the meaning of the whirling dervishes is valuable for the studies of religion and dance forms as well as of Turkish culture. In addition it is an aesthetic delight. Cine and Tele Production for the Ministry of Tourism and City of Konya. In French.

**Secret Egypt: A Trance Journey to the Heart and Soul of the Egyptian People.**

**Directed by Maxine Harris and Sheldon Rochlin. 52 min. 1995.**

Travelogue of a journey in search of elements of mysticism in contemporary Egyptian culture, filmed in Cairo, Luxor, the Valley of the Kings, and other locations. Women and men are seen in various trance dances, some involving spirit possession, exorcism and healing. Also depicted are stick and sword dances, wedding celebrations, belly dancing, and dancing and music by a family of snake handlers. The narration includes numerous quotations from the Sufi poet Rumi.

Starts with Rumi quote: "Heaven is made of the smoke of hearts that burn away, Blessed is the one who burns away like this". First ten minutes includes two segments with Sufis, there is much less later. In one of the two scenes outside of the shrine of a Sufi saint women in black and veiled face gather and dance. Led by an elderly woman, half a dozen women dance in black, with veiled faces.

Further information: [http://www.mysticfire.com/frmst\\_single.html?sku=76348](http://www.mysticfire.com/frmst_single.html?sku=76348)

**Sema of Peace, Sacred Dance of the Whirling Dervishes. Edited by John Comerford, John Dicks, John Murph. 19 min. 1995.**

Video of a Semá, a ceremony held annually on the anniversary of the passing of Persian mystic and poet Mevlana Jelaluddin Rumi on Dec. 17, 1273. This performance was held under the direction of Shaikh Jelaluddin Loras in Seattle. About 100 Sufis of the Mevlevi Order of America, including lots of women perform the Sema on a basketball court. The video is an abbreviated version of the ceremony; each segment is introduced but heavily edited. The accompanying booklet includes the full text of narration, mostly spiritual references. The other included insert explains the movements of the Sema Ceremony.

Further information: [http://www.hayatidede.org/V1/lovers\\_sp8/lovers\\_sp\\_friends.html](http://www.hayatidede.org/V1/lovers_sp8/lovers_sp_friends.html)

**'Tawwaf' Zikr at Lama. 30 min. 2004.**

Shaykh Hisham al-Kabbani of the Naqshbandi Orde, gives a beautiful recital after the Noon prayer at The Lama Foundation, a spiritual community in New Mexico, USA. Afterwards, there is a very special Naqshbandi Dhikr for this New-Age community, led by Mawlana Shaykh Nazim.

Further information: <http://www.suficinema.com/sn-009.htm>

**Topkapi Palace, 5, The Sacred Relics. 23 min.**

This video details the collection of sacred relics amassed by Yavuz Sultan in the early 16th century and also the special building in which these are housed. Viewers are given close examination of the robe, letter, seal, swords and other possessions of the Prophet Mohammed as well as pieces of the arm of St. John the Baptist.

**Turning (Whirling Dervishes). Directed by Dianna Cilento. 48 min.**

This beautifully presented memorial for the 700th anniversary of Jalul'uddin al Rumi's death traces the evolution of the human concept and appreciation of Universal Nature from the Anatolian Neolithic city of Catal Huyuk through Ephesus to Konya. The ritualistic dance Sema of the whirling dervishes, in which Man is the link between God and Creation, is both displayed and explained. Produced by Beshara Fouad.

**Whirling Dervishes. Directed by Giraard Vericruysse. 12 min.**

It is a brief photographic essay of a performance of the Mehlevi dervishes dancing the sama, the Sufi ritual seeking spiritual union with God. Produced by Marc Mopty.

**The Whirling Dervishes of Turkey. 90 min. 1997.**

Performed by the Mevlevi Ensemble of The Mevlana Culture and Art Foundation. Filmed at the Cathedral of St. John the Devine, New York City, Nov. 11, 1994. Selections from the spiritual music of Turkey and from the words of Jalaluddin Rumi, read by Sheik Kabir

Helmski. Four movements of the Mevlevi Sema, a Sufi Ceremony of Remembrance.  
Recitation of the Holy Qur'an. Dr. Celaleddin Chelebi, the 21st generation descendant of  
Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi and head of the Mevlevi Order ends the tape with a short sermon on  
love as the prophet's message.

Further information: <http://www.heartheworld.org>