



Multi-Sited Sufism:

Transmissions, Translations and Transcendence

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In recent years a wealth of scholarship has begun to focus on the global character and spread of Sufism, emphasizing how traditional Islamic mysticism has been transformed as it travelled to the West (Malik and Hinnels 2006; Geaves, Dressler and Klinkhammer 2009), developed new ways of adapting to modernity (Bruinessen and Howell 2007), and found a new home in migrant communities around the world (Werbner 2003; Stjernholm 2011; Geaves and Gabriel 2013). Contemporary Sufism, so recent scholarship demonstrates, has moved dramatically beyond the domain of the local to which earlier scholarship assigned it. A Sufi order need no longer be restricted to a single site, a shaykh, a tomb, a relic, a zikr practice or a group of murids. Sufism has become a network society. Sufi orders are increasingly mediated, multi-sited assemblages that tie people, places and objects to each other in a rhizomic structure that is simultaneously transnational and transcendent, global and intimate.

This conference seeks to take this 'global' aspect of global Sufism seriously. We do so by assembling scholars who have conducted 'multi-sited' research (field-based or archival) into global Sufi *туруq*, focusing on the links and relations—at once intimate and political, formal and invisible, virtual and charismatic—that one site maintains to other sites. How, this conference asks, is the transcendent translated into the transnational in contemporary Sufism? And how is the transnational translated into the transcendent? Whether it is by a political ambition to remake the world through a reintroduction of the gold dinar (Bubandt 2011), through an emphasis on global love (Werbner 2003), on militant action (Evans-Prichard 1949), on blood ties (Ho 2006), or on personal mimicry of the Prophet (Rytter 2014), the appeal and spread of Sufism in the contemporary world are enabled, so this conference proposes, by the complex transmissions, translations and ideas of transcendence that travel within each Sufi network (and sometimes between them).

The overall goal of the conference is to establish a novel and multi-sited analytical imaginary for the study of contemporary Sufism as a way of understanding its global popularity and plasticity. The conference, we hope, will explore not just how globalization has changed Sufism but also how Sufism, in ways parallel with but not identical to other religious movements, has become a dynamic of globalization in itself.

The conference is sponsored by the project *Sufism and Transnational Spirituality* (www.sufism.au.dk)