

Sufism in Canada

Weaving Islamic Practice and
Contemporary Spirituality

EDITED BY GENEVIÈVE
MERCIER-DALPHOND AND
MERIN SHOBHANA XAVIER



UBC Press • Vancouver

© UBC Press 2025

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without prior written permission of the publisher.

UBC Press is a Benetech Global Certified Accessible™ publisher. The epub version of this book meets stringent accessibility standards, ensuring it is available to people with diverse needs.

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: Sufism in Canada : weaving Islamic practice and contemporary spirituality /
edited by Geneviève Mercier-Dalphonf and Merin Shobhana Xavier.

Names: Mercier-Dalphonf, Geneviève, editor. | Xavier, Merin Shobhana, editor

Description: Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20240504453 | Canadiana (ebook) 20240504909 |

ISBN 9780774870696 (hardcover) | ISBN 9780774870719 (PDF) |

ISBN 9780774870726 (EPUB)

Subjects: LCSH: Sufism—Canada.

Classification: LCC BP188.8.C3 S84 2025 | DDC 297.40971—dc23



Canada Council
for the Arts Conseil des arts
du Canada

Canada



BRITISH COLUMBIA
ARTS COUNCIL



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

UBC Press gratefully acknowledges the financial support for our publishing program of the Government of Canada, the Canada Council for the Arts, and the British Columbia Arts Council.

This book has been published with the help of a grant from the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, through the Scholarly Book Awards, using funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Permission to reproduce “Baffled in the Garden” and “Khizr,” from *Reminders on the Path* by Sheniz Janmohamed, granted by Mawenzi House Publishers Ltd.

UBC Press is situated on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) people. This land has always been a place of learning for the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, who have passed on their culture, history, and traditions for millennia, from one generation to the next.

UBC Press
The University of British Columbia
www.ubcpres.ca

Circles of Remembrance: The Halveti-Jerrahis of Toronto

2

Atif Khalil

If I ask myself “Did I become the human being I wanted to be?”
the answer is “Yes. Yes I did.”¹

– Janis Orenstein, 1948–2010 (Toronto Jerrahi
musician and teacher)

Every Saturday in Toronto, members of the Halveti-Jerrahi Order gather at the Canadian Sufi Cultural Centre on 270 Birmingham Street for an evening of remembrance (*dhikr*), prayer, spiritual instruction, and communion.² Although the main nucleus of attendees is made up of first- and second-generation Canadians of Turkish descent, the lodge, or *dargah* as they prefer to call it,³ is also home to regular visitors of various other ethnic and cultural backgrounds, from countries as diverse as Ethiopia, Bosnia, Pakistan, China, and Morocco. The diversity is due not only to the heterogeneous, cosmopolitan nature of the city, but also to the universal appeal of a *tariqa* (Sufi order) that now operates as a transnational spiritual organization, thanks in large part to the pioneering efforts of Muzaffer Ozak (d. 1985), who was known respectfully as Muzaffer “Efendi.” Along with Euro- and Afro-Canadian converts, the centre is also frequently visited by curious non-Muslims, drawn by everything ranging from a love of Rumi, the allure of Sufism, the music of Islam, a school project, to the hospitality of the community.⁴

The doors of the dargah open at 7:00 p.m. The evening begins with socializing, catching up on the week, and, if there are new visitors, with introductions to the order. Since many families participate, the lodge is typically bustling with children, who usually have the bottom floor set aside for them as a play area. The night officially opens with what is known as the *usul*, about twenty minutes of dhikr, which includes the *istighfar*, a formulaic expression in which the individual petitions divine forgiveness. It signifies repentance, a turning to God, and an interior cleansing or purification to start off the program. This is followed by the late evening (*maghrib*) or night (*isha*) congregational prayer, depending on the time of the year, due to the fluctuating sunset schedule. After dinner, there are hymns and *nashids* (songs in praise of the Prophet Muhammad). It is here that the musical talent of the order becomes apparent, as the melodious voice of Tevfik “Baba” Aydoner, the official *shaykh* (spiritual teacher) of the Canadian branch of the order, is accompanied by the instrumentation of the *nay* (an end-blown reed flute), the *saz* (a long-necked lute), and the harmonious singing of the Jerrahis, most of whom train regularly.

The musical session, the *meshk*, which may also integrate Mevlevi whirling, is then followed by a talk of instruction, or *sohbet*, where Tevfik Baba addresses some theme of the spiritual life, responds to questions, or discusses a pressing matter facing the community. Occasionally, he may go through portions of a Sufi book, such as Robert Frager’s *Heart, Self and Soul* (1999),⁵ interspersed with his own commentary. The spiritual pedagogy of the order relies on a great deal of storytelling, as one finds in Muzaffer Ozak’s *Love Is the Wine* (2009).⁶ Even when the tales are repeated, as they often are, listeners will inevitably find themselves drawing out new lessons and shades of meaning, as deeper layers unfold through each retelling. Political discussions are typically avoided, unless of direct relevance, probably an extension of the post-Ottoman Sufi tradition of Turkey, where any such conversations put the community at risk. The absence of such topics also helps create a relatively neutral space that is welcoming to people of all political stripes.

Finally, the main event of the night, the gathering of remembrance, takes place in the *maydan*, or large central prayer hall. For the ceremony, the lights are dimmed, and the women seat themselves in a line, or lines,

whereas the men sit in a circle, or concentric circles, depending on their numbers. The circle symbolizes divine eternity, and the line symbolizes divine infinity – eternity and infinity representing, in Sufi metaphysics, twin aspects of God, one masculine and the other feminine. The encounter between the two can be seen as representing the meeting of Heaven and Earth or as a threshold through which what is transcendent in the human being comes into contact with what is immanent in the divine.

Seated at the top of the circle where the two ends of the circumference meet, with an ornate, beautifully handcrafted Turkish *mihrab* (prayer niche) behind him, Tevfik Aydoner presides over dhikr. He is flanked by two large candles, one symbolizing knowledge, the other wisdom, both seen as necessary for wayfaring. The “invokers,” or participants, sit on sheepskin mats, a symbol of humility, contentment, and service. Just as the sheep gives entirely of itself through its wool, meat, and milk, the dervishes must give fully of themselves in humble service to God and his creatures, content, in a state of *rida* (satisfaction, good-pleasure) with what divine providence has singled out for them. This at least is how the Jerrahis understand it. Tevfik Aydoner’s sheepskin is red, a symbol of the *shahada*, or testimony of faith. The women wear green shawls, the colour representing the *shariah* that protects the Muslim community. Most of the men also wear green vests, though there are a few other colours, as well as tall white prayer hats, somewhat shorter than the famous cylindrical ones worn by the Mevlevi, which symbolize the tombstone that marks the death the aspiring mystic seeks to attain while still in this world.

The precise structure of the main dhikr varies from one lodge to another, and in the case of the Canadian dargah, has undergone some variation during the last two decades. Typically, the dhikr opens with a prayer. Tevfik Aydoner praises God and petitions Him to send blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad, his companions, and the saints. He prays for peace and the well-being of the world. As he recites the supplication, the dervishes hymn the name “Allah” in a quickened tempo, but not in unison, as a type of *amen* to the request. This is followed by the chanting of *la ilaha illallah* (there is no god but God), the first part of the shahada, understood not simply as a testament to monotheism, but to a belief that no reality should dominate the human heart other than God, since no other reality exists. The rhythmic, unified invocation of

the formula is accompanied by the synchronized swaying of the invokers, with physical movement forming an essential component of the ritual. The body is fully integrated into the ceremony as the participants turn to God through every part of themselves.

In much of the Sufi tradition, the first words of the shahada, *la ilaha*, which mean “there is no god,” signify a negation of the illusory nature of the world. The word “la,” whose morphological structure resembles a sword, is meant to cut away one’s ties to the world. The next part of the shahada, “but God,” is recited with a movement toward the heart, an affirmation of the divine presence that can be experienced through the human centre – “the Throne of the All-Merciful,” as the famous tradition states. Other litanies follow, with the entire ceremony, which runs for about an hour, ending as it began, with prayers of petition. The dervishes serve tea to everyone, as Tefvik Aydoner shares some concluding words of wisdom to close the gathering of remembrance.⁷

The Founding of the Order

The origin of the Halveti-Jerrahi Order (Arabic Khalwatiyya-jarrahiyya) can be traced to Muhammad Nur al-Din al-Jarrahi, who was born on May 4, 1678.⁸ His paternal lineage from the Prophet Muhammad came by way of the Prophet’s grandson Husayn (d. 680), and his maternal lineage was from Abu ‘Ubayda al-Jarrah (d. 639), one of the ten companions promised Paradise. According to tradition, he so distinguished himself as a student that when he completed his formal religious education, he was appointed chief *qadi* (judge) of Egypt, which was then part of the Ottoman Empire, at the tender age of nineteen (Freidlander 1991, 234). Setting off to take up his new position, he rode through Istanbul, followed by an entourage, and paused at his uncle’s house to bid him farewell. The uncle, we are told, invited him to visit the shaykh of a branch of the Khalwatiyya Order whose Sufi lodge, or *tekke*, stood a stone’s throw away.⁹ Accepting the invitation, Nur al-Din ended up participating in the dhikr ceremony of the order, during which he experienced such ecstasy that he sought out the mentorship of the tariqa’s shaykh, ‘Ali ‘Ala’ al-Din. The Sufi master accepted him on condition that he “put the world behind him” (Freidlander 1991, 236). He duly complied, distributing his wealth to family and relinquishing his position as chief *qadi* of Egypt. Then he

entered a cell for forty days of solitary retreat, or *khalwa*, after which the Khalwatiyya Order was named.¹⁰ During it, he occupied himself with fasting, prayer, and most importantly, an uninterrupted regimen of concentrated dhikr.¹¹

Nur al-Din stayed with his Sufi master for seven years, after which the role of guiding others as a shaykh and creating his own community was formally conferred upon him. This all happened when he was only twenty-six. Thus, in 1704, he founded the Halveti-Jerrahi Order. At the command of the sultan, its lodge was created in the Karagömrük region of Istanbul, where it remains to this day, functioning as both a spiritual centre and a burial site for Nur al-Din and his successors (Freidlander 1991, 236).

At the founding of the tariqa, Nur al-Din introduced what would become key elements of its practice. Among them were the “great morning litany,” the “great evening litany,” the *adab* (rules of etiquette) for initiates,¹² and specific rites of congregational remembrance – perhaps the hallmark of the order (at least, for outsiders). Since Sufism was an integral part of the Ottoman religious landscape, with many tariqas inhabiting a shared space, it was only natural that a great degree of cross-pollination would occur between the diverse communities that made up the empire.¹³ In the case of the Halveti-Jerrahis, Nur al-Din integrated some of the methods and practices of the Shadhilis, Naqshabandis, Qadiris, Mevlevis, and Bekhtashis, to name the most prominent influences. The central feature of the communal dhikr was perhaps the vocal invocation of the divine names, Hayy Hayy Hu, as well as the intense, animated, and hypnotizing repetition of Hayy (the Living), which reproduces the rhythmic back-and-forth sound of a saw on wood, cutting away what are believed to be lower impulses of the self (Freidlander 1991, 237). As a result of these practices, the Halveti-Jerrahis have sometimes been described as “howling dervishes.”

During his life, Nur al-Din delegated seven *khalifas*, or representatives, all of whom played an instrumental role in spreading the order throughout the empire to such regions as Bursa and Edirne. After guiding the Halveti-Jerrahis for eighteen years, Nur al-Din breathed his last. At his instructions, his final resting place was beside the feet of his mother, Amina, who had died in 1704, the year the order was founded, and

was buried in what would become the internal cemetery of the lodge. His unusual wish was because of the famous *hadith* (recorded tradition of the Prophet): “Paradise lies at the feet of the mother” (Blann 2017, 148). The Halveti-Jerrahis note that his demise at age forty-four, along with the conditions of his death and year of birth, had been predicted more than three centuries earlier by Aḥmad b. ‘Uthman al-Sharnubi, the khalifa of Ibrahim al-Dasuqi (d. 1296), the famous saint, or *wali*, of Egypt. In his book *The Ranks of the Friends of God (Ṭabaqat al-awliya’)*, al-Sharnubi wrote that

Sayyid Nūr al-Dīn al-Jarrāhī will be from Istanbul and will appear in the year 1115 A.H. He will live forty-four years. One of his miracles will be that he will see his station in heaven while in this world, and will enter paradise directly upon his demise. The prayers of those who visit him and of those who pray in his presence will be accepted by God (Freidlander 1991, 234).

Nur al-Din’s predicted age at death was calculated according to lunar years. He acknowledged the prophecy by appending his signature to the relevant part of the book, which can be found in the Fatih Library in Istanbul.¹⁴

Surviving the Collapse of the Ottoman Empire

One of the last men to preside over the Halveti-Jerrahi line during the Ottoman era was Fahreddin Efendi (Arabic Fakhr al-Din, literally “pride of the religion”). Born in 1886, he was raised in a Jerrahi environment. As he grew up, he played numerous roles in the dargah, ranging from coffee server and candle lighter to keeper of tombs and cook’s aid. In every way, he was reared in an ambience perfumed by the fragrance of the order. Then, at the age of nineteen, he entered a cell to embark on the standard forty-day khalwa. Later, he recalled the intense anguish he felt during the first twenty-four hours of a ritual which, outside of a religious context, may be described only as solitary confinement. “What am I doing here?” he kept asking himself, as he struggled with claustrophobia. By the next day, his misery had been transformed into an ecstasy that he would not have given up for anything. “Even someone

armed with a club,” he later said, “couldn’t have driven me from that cell.” According to his own account, he felt the presence of saints and of pilgrims congregating around the celestial Kaaba, as his inner eye opened to witness divine mysteries. This continued throughout his forty days in the cell. However, as soon as he emerged and returned to society, to the normal hustle-and-bustle of his daily routines, the eye of his heart closed, like the physical eye that immediately shuts in response to a disturbance (Blann 2017, 190–91).

In 1912, after returning from military service to Üsküdar, Fahreddin was made a shaykh of the order and commissioned with the task of heading one of its lodges (Blann 2017, 192). Then, in 1913, he became grand shaykh of the Halveti-Jerrahis. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of Kemal Atatürk’s fiercely secular republic, he played an instrumental role in preserving the tariqa and its main lodge in Karagümrük. In 1925, the newly founded state launched a campaign to eradicate the mystical orders, once a vibrant component of Ottoman society, with the result that many centres of Sufi activity were permanently closed and shrines destroyed, much as Wahhabi reformers had done in Arabia, though no doubt for very different reasons.¹⁵ In total, more than eighty Halveti tekkes were sealed shut or sold. Through delicate negotiations and manoeuvres, Fahreddin Efendi persuaded the authorities to allow the main Halveti-Jerrahi centre to remain standing as a cultural and historical site, as had been done for the Rumi mausoleum in Konya. Although the tekke no longer had a religious purpose, the building, with its rich two-century-old history and invaluable artifacts, was saved. As anti-Islamic and anti-Sufi fervour swept the nation’s secularists, Fahreddin displayed the same pragmatic approach. When sixty scholarly authorities, or *ulama*, were executed for refusing on principle to remove their turbans, he commented, “Why not take them off for a little while, instead of making the rest of us orphans of your knowledge?” (Blann 2017, 196). More than fifty years later, this same capacity to adapt to the realities of an increasingly post-Islamic world enabled the Halveti-Jerrahi Order to spread to an entirely different cultural and religious environment in the West.¹⁶

Over the course of his life, Fahreddin Efendi authored a number of mystical hymns, as well as a two-volume work entitled *The Radiant Lights*

of the *Venerable Nur al-Din*, a manual of sorts for khalifas of the order.¹⁷ He also composed a short manual for spiritual seekers in which he offered brief responses to questions that aspirants may pose. For example, he advised the *salik*, or spiritual itinerant, to avoid using words such as “I” or “me” since, apart from reflecting a subtle degree of egotism, this use usurped a right that properly belonged only to God. As an alternative, he suggested “we.” And rather than saying, for instance, “I mounted the horse,” one should say, “I became the animal’s rider,” since all activity was to be retraced to the only true cause in existence, the divine actor (Blann 2017, 193). The point of such seemingly trivial recommendations was gradually to transform aspirants’ perceptions of reality through a shift in language that allowed them to become more attentive to the overarching presence of God. This, after all, is one of the aims of Sufism, to be with God everywhere, not only in theory, but as a lived reality, and not just through heightened but ultimately transitory mystical states of consciousness – “peak experiences” to use the parlance of the modern study of mysticism.

Like many Turkish men of his day, Fahreddin Efendi married late, to Fariha (“Sultan Valide”). Everyone who knew the couple saw their relationship as a loving one. Although they never had children of their own, they adopted three girls, because of the hadith in which the Prophet says that anyone who raises three daughters well would be with him in Paradise (Blann 2017, 192). In the final year of his life, Fahreddin was bedridden for eight months due to a prolonged illness. “I’m going now, I’m leaving,” he would repeat to his wife. “You keep saying you are about to go,” she would retort, but “with whom will you leave us when you are gone?” She feared that she would be left destitute and alone, but he assured her that his disciples would take good care of her: “I am leaving you with such children that all will be well for you after I’m gone.” He added, “There couldn’t be anyone closer or more helpful than these, even if they were from our own progeny” (Blann 2015, 49).

Fahreddin Efendi died in 1966, his end coinciding with the death anniversary of the Prophet’s grandson Hasan (d. 670). For his funeral, he requested that soil from Karbala (where the Prophet’s other grandson, Husayn, had been killed) be placed around his eyes. When his disciple Safer Dal complied, he (and those with him) claimed that tears of blood

accumulated beneath the head, interpreted as a sign of his love for the *ahl al-bayt*, the family of the Prophet. The prayer ceremony for his burial was held at the Fatih Mosque in Istanbul. It was led by Muzaffer Ozak, whom Fahreddin had initiated nine years earlier. He also led those present in a public procession of dhikr through the streets. The sight was so moving that one observer remarked, “If Muzaffer is leading such funeral processions as this, I am now content to die” (Blann 2015, 50). In violation of Turkish law, Muzaffer admitted the public to the tekke, as Fahreddin was buried close to the founder of the order (Ozak 2001, 11).

Coming to America

Muzaffer Ozak was born in 1916 to Mehmet Ozak and Aysha Hanim.¹⁸ Although Mehmet came from a line of military men, he decided to pursue a career as a religious scholar and merchant. Aysha was a descendant of the Prophet and the granddaughter of a Halveti shaykh. One day, as Mehmet passed through his future fiancée’s small town in the Balkans, he stopped at her grandfather’s tekke to seek treatment for an illness. The sickness that brought him to its doorstep became the occasion for him eventually to join the Halvetis and marry Aysha, the granddaughter of Sayyid Husayn. Due, however, to political upheavals in the Ottoman Empire, not to mention his own ties to and support for the sultan, Mehmet died tragically when Muzaffer was only six months old. Murad, Muzaffer’s older brother, also died not long after the First World War at the hands of occupying forces, leaving Aysha to care not only for Muzaffer, but also for his sister and two cousins, young girls orphaned by the war. “We were destitute,” he later wrote in a short autobiography (Ozak 2001, 2).¹⁹

Although Aysha received some external support, she would end up working as a bookseller in the Istanbul market, a trade that Muzaffer took up and continued until his own death. His mother wanted him to join the military, like the men on his paternal grandfather’s side of the family, hoping that it might bring them some financial relief and security. Then she had a dream in which a mysterious figure instructed her not “to make him a soldier of men, but a soldier of God” (Blann 2015, 10). Muzaffer would later say that the “holy person” who visited Aysha in her dream would remain with him, as an angelic presence, throughout

his life, always encouraging him to act virtuously. Like his father, Muzaffer sought to obtain a religious education. In pursuit of this goal, he studied Islamic law, hadith literature, Qur'anic commentary, and other subjects that made up the religious curriculum of the day, with some of the leading authorities of Istanbul. His immersion in these disciplines was facilitated by the fact that he had memorized large portions of the Qur'an. He had also received religious tutoring at a very young age from Sami Bey, a close friend of his father who was a scholar in his own right and who also happened to be the shaykh of three orders, including a branch of the Halvetis. By Muzaffer's own confession, Sami would be the most influential of his religious mentors, cultivating in him a love of the faith and eventually initiating him into the science of *tasawwuf* or Sufism when he was only twelve. After Muzaffer's older brother, Murad, died, Sami helped the family financially. Muzaffer remained close to him for twelve years until his death. He continued to attend religious lessons in the evenings while holding a full-time job, since "poverty obliged me to work in the day" (Ozak 2001, 3).

As he matured into adulthood, he took up positions at local mosques as a muezzin, preacher, and imam, regularly leading the Friday prayers. In total, he taught and served in forty-two mosques in Istanbul. Despite his involvement and recognition in the shariah-centred religious milieu of the city, he also maintained some ties with its Sufi communities – at least, to the extent that was possible considering they were forced to operate below the radar. His second Sufi shaykh, Tahir Marashi, played a decisive role in the development of his mystical life during the seven years they spent together and cultivated in him an appreciation for Ibn 'Arabi, an Andalusian mystic who died in 1240.²⁰ When Tahir died in 1957, Muzaffer was unsure of where to go next and contemplated joining either the Rifa'i or Qadiri tariqas. Finally, after a short period of soul searching and prayers for guidance (*istikhara*), he dreamt that he was absorbed in dhikr at the Halveti-Jerrahi tekke in Karagömrük, while Fahreddin Efendi sat by the window in a prayer cap and ordinary suit, singing a beautiful eulogy for the Prophet. Then "I woke up," he wrote, and "everything was clear" (Ozak 2001, 8).

A few days later, he made his way to Fahreddin's house, to inquire whether he might be accepted as a disciple. Safer let him in, and as he

entered, he was surprised to find the Sufi shaykh standing in respect. On being served coffee, Muzaffer politely refrained from lighting a cigarette, as was his habit, but Fahreddin insisted that he smoke. “Coffee without a cigarette,” he remarked, “is like sleeping without a blanket in the winter.” He added, “Among ourselves we attach more importance to love than respect.” After introductions, Muzaffer finally recounted his dream. Fahreddin assured him that it was indeed auspicious but added, “We must seek our permission as well,” since he too would need to receive a sign before accepting Muzaffer (Blann 2015, 35).

Shortly afterward, the sign appeared in the form of a dream. Fahreddin dreamt that Muzaffer was in his home, accompanied by a saint, and was given the name Ashki, meaning “lover.” Since Muzaffer was already quite advanced on the path when he “took hand,” he was made into a shaykh in his own right by 1959.²¹ When he sought to enter a forty-day khalwa following his investiture, Fahreddin informed him that it was no longer necessary. Fahreddin was among the last of the spiritual masters in the lineage to undertake the practice and did not require it of his own disciples, an indication that his leadership was transforming the tariqa to accommodate itself to post-Ottoman realities. The rigours of the earlier Sufis were no longer necessary – or the energy was better channelled into other avenues.²² This, at least, seems to have been Fahreddin’s intention. Besides, he might have felt that Muzaffer would be unable to shirk his communal responsibilities for such a long period without arousing unwanted suspicion. The political opposition to Sufism espoused by Atatürk’s supporters had not yet abated in the country. To this day, the khalwa seems rare among Sufi orders. With the demands of modern life, most tariqas are content for their members simply to maintain a regimen of daily litanies in addition to the five canonical prayers.²³

Fahreddin died in 1966, after which Muzaffer became the grand shaykh of the order. A few years later, he met the man who would play a key role in bringing the Halveti-Jerrahi Order to the United States. This was Tosun Bayrak, an accomplished artist, professor, retired Olympic wrestler, and former diplomat of Turkish origin. He lived in the United States, but he and his wife, Jamila Hanim, had returned to his home country to attend ceremonies of the Mevlevi Order. During their trip, a woman encouraged them to visit Muzaffer, described as a very special

master in Istanbul. In 1970, she finally took them to meet him. Both were impressed, having found what they were searching for. Within a short time, Tosun was himself made a shaykh and instructed to lead a community in New York. Initially, he was reluctant. He felt unworthy and unqualified since he had no religious education and, worse, a quite worldly, self-indulgent past. Yet, it was precisely that worldliness, now behind him, that made him suitable for the role. “By age thirty you had tasted riches, women, and fame as an artist and a wrestler,” Muzaffer assured him. “Now there is nothing to make you turn back and say, ‘I missed something.’ That’s why I’m making you a sheikh” (Blann 2015, 73). Besides, the theme of a saint with a sinful past is a recurring one in Sufism, and having a checkered background has not prevented penitents from reaching great spiritual and mystical heights or even becoming guides for others.²⁴ One is reminded of the advice of Rumi: just as former thieves make the best police officers because they are better acquainted with the ways of thievery than anyone else, so spiritual masters who find their way to God after a life of sin are uniquely positioned to help others. The foresight of Muzaffer Efendi on this matter would become clearer with the passage of time, as the Halveti-Jerrahis would remain relatively free of the type of scandals that have plagued other spiritual communities in the West.

In 1980, Tosun Bayrak and Jamila Hanim opened a permanent tekke in Chestnut Ridge, a village in New York state, which later became the centre for the Jerrahi Order of America. Muzaffer Ozak’s influence in the United States would also grow through the deep relationships he forged with Fariha Freidrich, Lex Hixon, Shems Freidlander, Robert Frager, and a host of other American admirers, many of whom had roots in the vibrant spiritual counterculture of the country. He visited the United States thirteen times, in trips that were organized by his American disciples, helping to spread the order far beyond Anatolia and the surrounding areas. His own father had foreseen this, informing his wife before his death not to “worry about this child. He will go to the new continent and bring Islam and Sufism” (Blann 2015, 4–5).

Muzaffer’s ability to win hearts in the United States had much to do with his love for Americans and what he saw as the sincerity of their yearning for matters of the heart.²⁵ When he addressed his audiences, he

was often deferential and ensured that his listeners did not feel spiritually inferior. Even in disagreements with the occasional hostile interlocutor, he might be quick to point out the cultural differences that separated them. No doubt, the attraction of his message was partially grounded in the fact that he did not focus on the moral failures of America, a disposition that sometimes evoked the ire of his religious peers in Turkey. He did remark once that in the Muslim world he was often perceived as too liberal, whereas in America he was too conservative. It was perhaps only natural, then, for him to serve as a bridge between the two worlds.

Muzaffer Ozak died in the early morning of February 13, 1985 (Blann 2015, 287). Although relatively healthy, he had premonitions of his approaching death. For example, during the Ramadan of the previous summer, he had told his son Junaïd that it would be his last. He also informed him that though he had washed a thousand corpses, the day was quickly approaching when he would have to “wash his own,” a reference, it seems, to the final repentance that would be required of him before death. It is said that he was particularly jubilant on the night of his death, having asked his wife to make his favourite dessert, which he ate with delight. The couple had developed the habit of reading spiritual books together late into the night, such as Rumi’s *Masnavi*, before they went to sleep. Sometime after midnight, Muzaffer put the book down and went to perform ritual prayer. As he was absorbed in his litanies, he began to invoke with great concentration and power the divine name “Allah.” In the midst of dhikr, he gently leaned forward and passed away, peacefully, on his prayer rug (Blann 2015, 287–90). As his body was being prepared for burial, two stones from Karbala were placed on his eyes. Almost immediately, tears flowed out, which, according to his son’s testimony, later turned to blood – as had happened with his own teacher Fahreddin Efendi almost twenty years earlier. The next day, the funeral was held at the Fatih Mosque, and thousands came to pay their respects. The crowds were so large that riot police had to be called in to maintain order. The nineteenth grand shaykh of the Halveti-Jerrahis was buried, like his predecessors, in the lodge in Karagömrük (Blann 2015, 187–290). He would be succeeded by his khalifa Safer Efendi, ten years his junior, who would preside over what would soon become a transnational spiritual organization until his own death in 1999.

The Halveti-Jerrahis of Canada

Born in 1951, Tevfik Aydoner, or “Tevfiq Baba,” as he is affectionately known to the Toronto Jerrahis, did not grow up in a particularly religious atmosphere, though his mother was affiliated with the Qadiris. As he matured into adulthood, he was, by his own admission, no different from any of the other “Istanbul boys” coming of age in a highly secularized, post-Ottoman climate that was shaped by the ideals and values of Atatürk. For a while, after he left home to live in Germany, he played with a band at a nightclub, enjoying what life had to offer a young man unencumbered by religious restraints, living away from his parents. However, when he was in his early twenties, he had what he could only describe as a supernatural experience that completely changed him, but that no leader of any faith tradition whom he consulted could explain. Not until he met Muzaffer Ozak, quite by coincidence in 1983 at the latter’s Istanbul bookstore, and put the question to him, “What happened to me?” did he receive an answer that finally made sense of the mysterious event that boggled him for almost a decade.²⁶

The story, as he recounts it, is that late one night, as he was driving with a friend back to Frankfurt from Istanbul, they had a terrible car accident on the highway. He suffered only a few scratches, but she was so badly hurt that the paramedics who arrived at the scene thought she had little hope of surviving. As they rushed her into operating theatre of the local hospital, he sat in the waiting room in despair. Although he had not been under the influence of drugs or alcohol and had not been speeding or driving recklessly, he was consumed by guilt for his role in potentially ending his friend’s life, a young woman who could normally expect to live for many years. That he himself was virtually unscathed merely exacerbated his feelings of contrition. As he sat there, earnestly praying to God for a miracle, he suddenly found himself surrounded by a blue light and outside of his body, standing to its right and looking down at a weeping young man with his face in his hands. He felt pity for the man. Then he heard a voice say, from his right, “Why is he in despair? Death is a part of life. One follows the other.” To this, his disembodied soul responded, “But he does not know. He does not understand that.” The first voice said, “Very well. We will take care of her. She will be fine.” Then he felt a hand and was back in his body. “The

operation is over,” the doctor said to him, as he touched his shoulder.²⁷ His friend had survived.

What was particularly perplexing for Tevfik Aydoner was that this was not a simple out-of-body experience, because it involved three dimensions of his self that he experienced simultaneously. Somehow, in his grief and desperation, his soul emerged out of his body as an observer and stood to the body’s right. Then, an even higher self – and he insisted it was his own self, not an external being – emerged and stood farther to the right. A conversation then ensued between the higher self and a part of his own soul in the middle, which he, as the soul in the middle, also heard. Struggling to find the right words to describe the baffling experience, Tevfik said it was an exchange between (1) a relatively unconscious part of himself, the soul in the middle, as observer; (2) a higher conscious part of the same soul in the middle, communicating the lower unconscious soul’s state to the entity to the right; and (3) the entity to the right, a super-conscious part of the self that had a divine-like power to alter events. In other words, the soul in the middle had detached itself from the body, and a part of it was now communicating with the higher self, explaining what the lower part of the soul was feeling, namely its grief and its incapacity to understand the inevitability of death and the role of divine providence.

In the language of Sufi psychology, which recognizes not just two basic levels of the human personality (body and soul), but multiple ones (anywhere from three to seven or more), Tevfik admitted that the three beings might also be identified as (1) the lower, everyday self or *nafs*, usually translated as the “unconscious ego,” and which Tevfik also calls the “animal soul”; (2) a higher soul, which he calls “the human soul”; and (3) the Spirit, or what he calls “the lordly soul,” and which may also be identified as the transpersonal consciousness.²⁸ This would explain why the third entity was beyond the other two, unconfined by his socially and culturally conditioned personality. Whatever language one uses, they were, Tevfik insisted, three different layers of his own self, each deeper than the other.

Tevfik added that when someone is desperately in need, as he himself was in the aftermath of the accident, the higher levels of the self are awakened to guide the person through the trial, but this awakening is usually

only temporary, and the person recedes into a sleeping state when the ordeal ends or he recovers from it. Spiritual practice, on the other hand, helps bring one into a state of sustained contact with the transpersonal, divine side of the self, an inner reality that binds the person to every other human being – each as a receptacle of the divine spirit – and to God. The saints, Tevfik noted, are in touch with the lordly soul or Spirit at every moment and with every breath, this being one of the defining qualities of *walaya*, or sainthood.²⁹ Expressed differently, there is only one true Self, with many layers and faces,³⁰ and this is the meaning of the Sufi doctrine of the “unity of being.” Although Tevfik did not recall the precise details of what Muzaffer Ozak explained to him in 1983 when they first met, he remembered that his few words resolved the paradox and planted the seeds that, through years of meditating on the subject, allowed him to reach his current understanding of the transformative event.³¹

Tevfik recognized that a skeptic might dismiss his experience in the hospital waiting room as a hallucination, a survival mechanism produced by the brain to help him cope with trauma. And this would be a convincing explanation, one he could accept himself, were it not for another peculiar feature of the event: after her surgery, he knew that his friend would fully recover, in contrast to the expectations of her medical team, and he also predicted each stage of her recovery during the two months that she regained her health. And this knowledge, inspired inwardly by the higher self that had emerged as he sat in the waiting room, proved accurate, to the surprise and disbelief not only of her parents, who had joined him, but also of the doctors, who had no explanation for his foreknowledge, especially since he had no training in medicine.

When they said that she would probably die within a few days after the operation, he insisted they were mistaken. She survived. When they informed him that she would remain in a coma, he told them they were wrong, predicting precisely when she would come out of it. And she did, on the very day. When they said that she would never be able to speak, he disagreed, and once again, accurately foretold precisely when her speech would return. And when they were uncertain of whether she would fully regain her memory, he insisted it was only a matter of time and knew when the process would begin. Once again, it came back, precisely when and how he predicted. This “gift of prophecy,” the power

to foretell the future, was confined only to her very complex recovery and remained with him only until her health was restored. Following this mysterious event, Tevfik, now an entirely new man, was ready to set out on a spiritual quest.

In 1977, Tevfik came to Toronto to visit some of his family, and ended up staying after he met Saadet, the woman who would become his wife. Some years after his initial meeting with Muzaffer Ozak, which took place while he was on a trip to Turkey from Canada, he began to visit the Chestnut Ridge Jerrahi Lodge in New York state, overseen by Tosun Bayrak, with whom he gradually formed a student-teacher friendship. He met Muzaffer on a few more occasions during these visits. Each meeting left a lasting impression. It was not so much Muzaffer's words, as Tevfik looked back in hindsight, but the presence he carried that touched him most. Tevfik's real growth in the order, however, would take place under the guidance and tutelage of Safer Efendi. After some time, he was instructed to lead a community of Jerrahis in Toronto, whose numbers were slowly growing, and this he did with Saadet. Eventually, in 1995, he was formally authorized as a shaykh of the Canadian branch of the order. Like Tosun Bayrak two decades earlier, he was reluctant to take on the role, given his checkered past and lack of formal religious training. But, also like Bayrak, he was assured that his previous "waywardness" would help protect the order, since he would be much less tempted to use his spiritual function to satisfy a desire that had not been resolved during his youth – a danger for those reared in the shelter of a *madrasa* or in *madrasa*-like conditions, without any real opportunities to "demonstrate their mettle."

In the late 2000s, the Toronto Jerrahis finally purchased a permanent property of their own, a former church, which they eventually transformed into the Canadian Sufi Cultural Centre. Until his death in 2018, Tosun Bayrak made frequent trips to Toronto with his disciples, and the Canadian Jerrahis (not all of whom are based in Toronto) regularly visited Chestnut Ridge. Those who are familiar with the history of the order in the United States will know that it split into two factions after the death of Muzaffer Ozak. Under the leadership of Lex Hixon and Shaykha Fariha, one group became more accommodating of American cultural norms, whereas the other, led by Bayrak, remained more bound

not only to the shariah and mainstream Islam, but also to the centre of the tariqa in Istanbul.³²

Tevfik Aydoner's relationship with the order began and stayed with Tosun Bayrak, ensuring that the Canadian branch remained faithful to traditional iterations of Sufism, even though it would hardly qualify as rigid or uncompromising. In fact, when Tevfik was put in charge of the Canadian community, he was instructed to be easygoing and to avoid rigidity on matters of religion. Nevertheless, he sought to strike a balance between tradition and reform, not swinging too far in either direction. As a result, the Canadian Jerrahis have retained a certain measure of flexibility, so that they might appeal to both mainstream Muslims, rooted in orthodoxy, and others who wish to integrate Islamic spirituality into their lives without feeling that they are adopting a foreign culture and way of life. Maintaining such a delicate balance has not always been easy, and Tevfik has realized that he cannot please everyone, having now functioned as a head of the community for more than thirty years. The challenges he faces are well known to Muslims who have grown up in the West.³³

The primary goal of Sufism, as Tevfik Aydoner explains, is to "become a human being," a theme he repeatedly addresses in his sohbet and private conversations. This message was also central to Muzaffer Ozak. Once, when he was asked how he became a shaykh, he replied, "I was born one from my mother's womb." He added,

In the universe of souls [*alam al-arwah*], in accordance with divine wisdom, Allah placed all professions on auction. From tyrants to kings to beggars, all livelihoods were put up for auction before the souls came to this world, though most of us don't remember it. So there, in the universe of souls, Allah asked, 'Who wants to be a sheikh of the Jerrahi tradition in such and such a year?' I answered, 'I do.' Then after designing this in the universe of souls, I came into this world.³⁴ Actually, it is much easier to become a sheikh than to become an authentic human being (Blann 2015, 141).

For Tevfik, the process of becoming human involves not only prayer and ethical transformation, but also service to others. "This is a time of action,

of communal service,” he said, “not of monasticism and isolation.”³⁵ To that end, the Jerrahis of Canada have been extensively involved in various social and charitable causes. They coordinate many outreach activities, from distributing soup and clothing at homeless shelters to volunteering at local seniors’ homes. In addition, the order organizes numerous food drives in Toronto.³⁶ But the heart of all these activities, the animating power behind the philanthropic efforts of the dervishes, lies in the practice of remembrance.³⁷

When Janis Orenstein, the Toronto musician, actress, and opera singer who had joined the Canadian dargah in the late 1990s, was diagnosed with terminal cancer, she asked Tosun Bayrak on one of his visits what she might do to prepare for death.³⁸ She thought he would advise her to engage in more charitable work, to increase her devotional prayers, or immerse herself in pious activities. Instead, he instructed her to “know yourself.” Self-knowledge, he counselled, was the only way to truly prepare for one’s journey from this world. And this knowledge had to be awakened, he explained, through anamnesis, recollection, and remembrance of one’s nature, since, as Sufi tradition has it, “he who knows himself, knows his Lord.”³⁹

Some years before she died, Janis produced an album with her husband, Aydin, also a Jerrahi musician, of *dhikr* and *ilahis* (hymns). The couple entitled it *Teardrops from the Ocean of Love*, a testament not only to their affection for each other, but also to their belief in the Sufi doctrine that love is the final telos of existence.⁴⁰ Every soul, in the view of this doctrine, is a droplet, suffering in separation from its origin, an ocean of divine love. By awakening to a knowledge of who we are, we realize that our purpose is to prepare ourselves to return to the world from which we came, to our homeland, to an ocean of unfathomable vastness, beauty, and love – a love that, like water, binds all teardrops together.

On the morning that Janis died, her close friend Halima, a young Canadian Jerrahi woman, dreamt that Janis’s body was lying in a room to be prepared for burial. Janis then appeared to Halima, separated from her body, in an ethereal, translucent, and luminous form, handed her a book on love, and encouraged her to meditate on it, since it is “the story of life.” She also said to her, and of a mutual female friend in the Jerrahi community, that she would “love them both forever.” As Janis was about

to leave, she gave Halima a garnet ring as a token of that love. When Halima woke up, she discerned a strong but pleasant floral scent that was not in the room before. A few hours later, Tevfik Aydoner called to let her know that Janis had passed away that very morning at her home in Milford, Ontario. A little more than forty days afterward, Halima attended a Jerrahi *mevlud* (Arabic, *mawlid*), a celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birth.⁴¹ At the event, Aydin gave her a sealed package, saying that Janis had left it for her as a gift, setting it aside some days before she died.⁴² On opening it, Halima found, to her surprise, the garnet ring, just as she had seen in the dream.⁴³

Notes

- 1 Shortly before she passed away on December 30, 2010, Janis Orenstein said these words to her husband and friends. "Janis Orenstein," *Globe and Mail*, December 31, 2010, <https://www.legacy.com/ca/obituaries/theglobeandmail/name/janis-orenstein-obituary?pid=189945639>. This essay, completed on the thirteenth anniversary of her death, is dedicated to her memory. Some of the details of her role in the Toronto Jerrahi community are given below.
- 2 I would like to express my gratitude to Tevfik Baba, Saleh, Halima Rabia, and others for the generosity and Jerrahi spirit of hospitality with which they made themselves available for interviews. All are affiliated with the Canadian branch of the Halveti-Jerrahi Order, which is centred in Toronto.
- 3 This word typically applies to the burial site of saint, but here it is employed loosely to refer to the centre of the Sufi community's activity. For more on the concept and history of the dargah (door, court), see Dickson and Sharify-Funk (2017, 122) and Schimmel (1975, 232).
- 4 For a brief history of Sufism in Canada, see Hermansen (2000, 176–77). This well-researched study overlooks the Halveti-Jerrahis of Canada because it was written before they established themselves as a visible presence in Toronto. See also Xavier (2023).
- 5 Robert Frager is himself a Jerrahi shaykh at the forefront of research into transpersonal psychology. His book makes the complexities of Sufi psychology easily accessible to the layperson and is useful for spiritual instruction. In the introduction to Ozak (2009), Frager writes about the impression he made on him during their first meeting.
- 6 For the most comprehensive collection of Muzaffer Efendi's teaching tales in English, see *Irshad: Wisdom of a Sufi Master* (Ozak 1988), which consists of more than seven hundred pages.
- 7 On the communal dhikr ceremony of the order as practised in Turkey, see Geels (1996).

- 8 Much of what follows on his life is drawn from the excellent essay by Shems Freidlander (1991).
- 9 The branch was the Jalwatiyya Order, founded by the famous Ottoman scholar-saint ‘Aziz Mahmud Huda’i (1541–1628). A descendant of Junayd of Baghdad (d. 910), he served as qadi of Edirne, Syria, Bursa, and Egypt, and wielded tremendous religious authority during his lifetime. The first to deliver the Friday sermon in the famous Blue Mosque, he authored more than thirty works, seven of them in Ottoman Turkish. A visitor to his shrine in Istanbul may be struck by the number of cats that reside in and around the complex – not surprising for those who are familiar with the city, which has sometimes been called “catstantinople.” During a visit to the shrine in 2018, the author noticed a litter of kittens adjacent to the mihrab where the imam leads the prayer. They were being comfortably nursed by their mother, surrounded by an abundant supply of milk and cat food!
- 10 In Sufism, the number forty often represents a period of incubation, gestation, maturation, and purification. According to a tradition (not found in the standard hadith collections but common to the mystical literature of Islam), God said, “I kneaded the clay of Adam with my two hands (cf. Q 38:75) for forty days.” This enabled Adam to receive the infusion of God’s life-giving breath (Murata 1992, 39). Sharafuddin Maneri (d. 1381), the northeast Indian saint (from Bihar), felt that there was a direct relationship between the spiritual practice of the forty-day khalwa and the forty-day kneading of Adam’s clay, both being analogous stages on the way to perfection. The significance of the number is also underscored by a hadith in Bukhari where the first phases of a child’s growth in the womb are divided into three forty-day periods before the soul is finally breathed into it (Book 55, no. 3548). According to another hadith (the status of which was, nevertheless, the subject of some debate), wisdom flows from the heart onto the tongue if one devotes oneself to God for forty days. Nor can we forget that the Prophet Muhammad received his first revelation at the age of forty. It is also said that when the end of time draws near, the Mahdi will emerge when he too will be forty. According to the Gospel of Mark, Jesus was tempted by the devil for forty days, and in the Hebrew Bible and the Qur’an, Moses was on the mountain for the same duration. Astronomically, forty is the number that combines the twenty-eight lunar mansions with the twelve signs of the zodiac (Schimmel 1993, 245–53). See also Suhrawardi’s (2005, 255–71) explanation for the wisdom behind forty days of single-minded devotion to God, *‘Awarif al-ma’arif*.
- 11 For more on the practice of khalwa, see the chapter on the subject in Qushayri, *The Risalah: Principles of Sufism* (2001). This English edition was produced by the Jerrahi scholar and translator Rabia T. Harris.
- 12 On the central place of adab in Sufi life, see Khalil (2020, 164–65).
- 13 For more on this theme, and on the rise of the Halvetis, see Curry (2020, 404–6). See also Green (2012, 132–37) and Schimmel (1991, 223–32).

- 14 Such predictions were (and continue to be) commonplace in Sufism and have been corroborated so frequently that one cannot easily dismiss them as products of a pious imagination. Ghazali (d. 1111) explained the mechanism of how they occur in a section devoted to the subject in his *Ihya' 'ulum al-Din* (*Reviving the Religious Sciences*). He argued that the capacity for prophecy can be awakened by the concerted polishing of the heart through the practice of dhikr, a cathartic exercise that enables the heart to access the tablet of celestial knowledge and divine decree (Ghazali 2010, 57–66). On the evidence for precognition offered by an MIT-trained psychologist at the forefront of studies into ESP and the paranormal, see Tart (2009, 131–50).
- 15 For an excellent analysis of the shrine culture of the Islamic world, the role of *baraka* (grace or blessing) in visiting burial sites of holy people, the differences between pilgrimage and tourism, and some of the broader theological debates surrounding the subject, see Buehler (2016, 89–121). For an introductory overview, see Dickson and Sharify-Funk (2017, 122–25).
- 16 For a good analysis of this feature of the order, see Dickson (2015).
- 17 Gregory Blann (2017) relied on this work for his valuable recounting of Nur al-Din's life in *The Garden of Mystic Love*.
- 18 There is some uncertainty regarding the birth date, and he could have been born a few years earlier.
- 19 According to the family, Aysha Ozak had thirteen children, most of whom died before the end of the First World War (Blann 2015, 4).
- 20 The head of the Halveti-Şabani Order was also a scholar of Ibn 'Arabi. Describing the fruits of his relationship with him, Muzaffer remarked (reflecting a clear influence of Ibn 'Arabi's philosophy), "I began to see everything through his eyes, and began to witness everywhere the Truth and signs of the Truth. I learned what a great treasure is hidden within the human soul, and what secrets are plainly evident, yet normally veiled from our eyes" (Blann 2015, 28).
- 21 In Sufism, to "take hand" refers to initiation into an order through an oath of allegiance to the shaykh.
- 22 This may have included greater concentration on social responsibilities. Certainly, there is a view in modern Sufism that due to the desacralized nature of the modern world, a small amount of exertion in the spiritual domain can evoke results that would have required a much greater degree of effort in previous periods.
- 23 The chapter on solitary retreat in Qushayri (1990, 23) includes a saying attributed to an early mystic, which highlights the merits of *not* going into the khalwa: "Only the very strong ones should be alone. As for the likes of us, society is more abundant and beneficial so that awareness of each other may impel us to strive."
- 24 On this motif in Sufi literature, see Khalil (2018).
- 25 As he explained, "My impression of the Americans was so favorable and I found them to be so warm-hearted, hospitable, and such intense spiritual-seekers that I really fell in love with them" (Blann 2015, 175). Blann (2015, 167) adds that he had made more trips to the United States by the end of 1984 than he had to Mecca and

Medina. As for his tendency to see beauty everywhere, this may be retraced to the influence of Ibn ‘Arabi on his thinking through Tahir Efendi, to a doctrine that locates God’s self-revelations and presence everywhere.

- 26 Tevfik Aydoner, phone interview by author, July 5, 2022.
- 27 Aydoner, interview, July 5, 2022.
- 28 For a discussion of the seven levels of the self, see Frager (1999, especially chs. 3 and 4).
- 29 The best study of the concept of walaya to date is Chodkiewicz (1993). See the first three chapters.
- 30 In one of his talks of instruction, Muzafer Ozak (2009, 36) said, “The highest level of the soul, the pure soul, is not a part of creation. It is an aspect of the Divine Attribute, *al-Hai* [= Hayy], The Everlasting.”
- 31 Tevfik’s experience has some striking similarities with what is known as the near-death experience, with, however, some notable differences: (1) it did not occur *during* the actual brush with death; (2) it was not a simple out-of-body experience, where a person looks at his or her unconscious, lifeless body, from the outside; and (3) he was not helped by the figure of “the guide” (an angel, a deceased relative, the divine light, a holy person), a being external to himself – which is most common in such experiences – but by his own higher self, with all three entities being different levels of his conscious self, even though the levels of awareness were different for each. With that said, the “higher self motif” is not entirely absent in literature regarding the near-death experience. For an excellent study of the near-death experience, see Lommel (2007).
- 32 For a recent analysis of this split, see Kasperski (2021).
- 33 For more on this subject, see [Chapter 7](#) in this volume.
- 34 The Qur’an, hadiths, and broader textual tradition of Islam are virtually silent about human existence before birth, though they are quite detailed in their descriptions of the afterlife. Other than a few passages about the Taking of the Covenant, or the story of Adam and Eve, we are not told much. For many Sufi authorities, this is simply because we are given what we need to know to prepare for what lies ahead – the details about our precise past ultimately being inconsequential. This does not preclude the possibility that, for these authorities, certain individuals may obtain knowledge of these matters through unveiling and divine bestowal, which they may transmit orally to others.
- 35 Aydoner, interview, July 5, 2022.
- 36 On Sufi social activism, see Xavier (2023), Epilogue.
- 37 On the significance of dhikr in Sufi thought and practice, see Raid al-Daghistani (2022), Lumbard (1999), Nasr (2007, 99–101), and Valiuddin (1980, 31–92). Valiuddin’s study may include the most comprehensive treatment of dhikr to date.
- 38 Musically speaking, Janis was a child prodigy. In Toronto, she studied at the Royal Conservatory of Music and later joined the Juilliard School of Music in New York. At fifteen, she played the voice of Clarice in the 1964 production of *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*. Her famous musical performance of “There’s Always Tomorrow” was completed in one take.

- 39 For more on the status and meaning of this tradition (usually attributed to the Prophet Muhammad in Sufi texts, though the attribution is contested by hadith specialists), see Chittick (1989, 344–46).
- 40 On love in Sufism, see the recent scholarly contributions by Ali (2016); Ibrahim (2023); and Lumbard (2020). See also the third chapter (“Rābi’a the Lover”) in Cornell (2019, 147–212).
- 41 For Muzaffer Efendi’s remarks on the significance of this occasion, see Ozak (1988, 411–13). On the history and significance of the mawlid in Islam, see Schimmel (1985).
- 42 In a widespread Islamic custom, a variety of prayers, litanies, and portions of the Qur’an are recited for the deceased forty days after death, as a sort of “gift from the living for the dead.” Included are supplications to God to ease the departed soul’s transition into the *barzakh* or “intermediary realm” that separates life in this world from the Afterlife proper, which, in Muslim doctrine, takes place after the final resurrection. Often, the occasion is simply called the “fortieth” (*arba’in* in Arabic, or *chalisva* in Urdu). The Jerrahis know it as the mevlud (mawlid, from the Arabic w-l-d root, “to bear a child”), because it is a commemoration of the first stage of the birth of the person in the barzakh. In a talk of instruction, Muzaffer Ozak (1988, 480) explains that the relationship between soul and deceased body is entirely severed after forty days, though the soul may return to the tomb from time to time when it is visited by loved ones. Although Halima was here attending a mevlud for the Prophet (a commemoration, as noted above, of his birth anniversary, the meaning in his case being different), the Jerrahis used the occasion to commemorate Janis’s “fortieth” as well because the dates of the two events (the Prophet’s birthday and the forty days following Janis’s death) came close to overlapping. Since the Canadian branch of the order meets once a week, any such events usually take place on the Saturday that is closest to the precise date of the day of religious significance.
- 43 On dreams in the Jerrahi tradition, see Ozak’s (2009, 46–57) short reflections on the subject.

References

- al-Daghistani, Raid. 2022. “Invoking God’s Name and the Practice of *Dhikr*.” In *Routledge Handbook of Islamic Ritual and Practice*, ed. Oliver Leaman, 185–99. New York: Routledge.
- Ali, Mukhtar. 2016. “The ‘Doctrine of Love’ in ‘Abd Allāh al-Ansārī’s *Manāzil al-sā’irin* with Critical Paraphrase of ‘Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī’s Commentary.” *Journal of Sufi Studies* 5, 2: 140–55.
- Blann, Gregory. 2015. *Lifting the Boundaries: Muzaffer Efendi and the Transmission of Sufism to the West*. 2nd ed. New York: Pir Press.
- . 2017. *The Garden of Mystic Love*. Vol. 2, *Turkish Sufism and the Halveti-Jerrahi Lineage*. Boulder: Albion-Andalus.
- Buehler, Arthur F. 2016. *Recognizing Sufism: Contemplation in the Islamic Tradition*. London: I.B. Tauris.

- Chittick, William. 1989. *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-ʿArabi's Metaphysics of Imagination*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Chodkiewicz, Michel. 1993. *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn ʿArabi*. Translated by Liadain Sherrard. Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society.
- Cornell, Rkia Elaroui. 2019. *Rābiʿa from Narrative to Myth: The Many Faces of Islam's Most Famous Woman Saint, Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawīyya*. London: Oneworld.
- Curry, John J. 2020. "Sufism in the Ottoman Empire." In *The Routledge Handbook on Sufism*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon, 399–417. New York: Routledge.
- Dickson, William Rory. 2015. *Living Sufism in North America: Between Tradition and Transformation*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Dickson, William Rory, and Meena Sharify-Funk. 2017. *Unveiling Sufism: From Manhattan to Mecca*. Sheffield, UK: Equinox.
- Frager, Robert. 1999. *Heart, Self and Soul: The Sufi Psychology of Growth, Balance and Harmony*. Wheaton, IL: Quest Books.
- Freidlander, Shems. 1991. "A Note on the Khalwatiyya-Jarrāhiyya Order." In *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 233–38. New York: Crossroad.
- Geels, Antoon. 1996. "A Note on the Psychology of Dhikr: The Halveti-Jerrahi Order of Dervishes in Istanbul." *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 6, 4: 229–51.
- Ghazali. 2010. *Kitab Sharḥ ʿAjaʿib al-qalb: The Marvels of the Heart, Book 21 of the Ihyaʾ ʿulum al-Din*. Translated by Walter James Skellie. Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae.
- Green, Nile. 2012. *Sufism: A Global History*. Wiley-Blackwell Brief Histories of Religion. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Hermansen, Marcia. 2000. "Hybrid Identify Formations in Muslim America: The Case of American Sufi Movements." *Muslim World* 90: 158–97.
- Ibrahim, Hany T. 2023. *Love in the Teachings of Ibn ʿArabi*. Sheffield, UK: Equinox.
- Kasperski, Jon G. 2021. "The Halveti-Jerrahis and the Legacy of Sheikh Muzafer in North America." Master's thesis, University of Lethbridge.
- Khalil, Atif. 2018. *Repentance and the Return to God: Tawba in Early Sufism*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- . 2020. "Sufism and Qurʾānic Ethics." In *Routledge Handbook on Sufism*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon, 164–65. New York: Routledge.
- Lommel, Pim van. 2007. *Consciousness beyond Life: The Science of the Near-Death Experience*. New York: HarperOne.
- Lumbard, Joseph E. 1999. "The Function of *dhikrullāh* in Sufi Psychology." In *Knowledge Is Light*, ed. Zailan Moris, 251–74. Chicago: ABC Press.
- . 2020. "Love and Beauty in Sufism." In *Routledge Handbook on Sufism*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon, 172–86. New York: Routledge.
- Murata, Sachiko. 1992. *The Tao of Islam: A Sourcebook on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Nasr, Seyyed H. 2007. *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and the Promise of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition*. New York: HarperOne.

- Ozak, Muzaffer. 1988. *Irshad: Wisdom of a Sufi Master*. Translated by Muhtar Holland. New York: Pir Press.
- . 2001. *The Unveiling of Love: Sufism and the Remembrance of God*. Translated by Muhtar Holland. New York: Pir Press.
- . 2009. *Love Is the Wine: Talks of a Sufi Master in America*. Edited by Ragip Frager. Prescott, AZ: Hohm Press.
- Qushayri. 1990. *Risala*. Translated by B.R. Von Schlegell. New York: Mizan Press.
- . 2001. *The Risalah: Principles of Sufism*. Translated by Rabia T. Harris. Chicago: Kazi.
- Schimmel, Annemarie. 1975. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- . 1985. *And Muhammad Is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- . 1991. “Sufism and Spiritual Life in Turkey.” In *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 223–32. New York: Crossroad.
- . 1993. *The Mystery of Numbers*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Suhrawardi. 2005. *‘Awarif al-ma’arif*. Edited by Mahmud ‘Abd al-Halim and Mahmud b. Al-Sharif. Cairo: Maktabat al-Iman.
- Tart, Charles T. 2009. *The End of Materialism: How Evidence of the Paranormal Is Bringing Science and Spirit Together*. Oakland: Noetic Books.
- Valiuddin, Mir. 1980. *Contemplative Disciplines in Islam*. London: East West.
- Xavier, Merin Shobhana. 2023. *The Dervishes of the North: Rumi, Whirling, and the Making of Sufism in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.