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## CONGRESS

Middle East and Muslim Worlds  
Studies

28 June - 2 July 2021



## Panel 70

## Sufi Experience in Contemporary writings and new reading perspectives

The influence of spirituality on contemporary literary writings can no longer be neglected. The recourse to mystical texts, to Masters like El Halladj or Ibn Arabi but also masters other than Muslims, lasts for about thirty years now. This spiritual part undermines the realistic spirit which is sometimes imposed on the readings of these literary texts.

Hence, the interest of searching for new avenues, another matter of reading able to account for the complexity of a certain spiritual text. Perhaps, precisely, a return to the sources, to the ancient mystical texts that can provide us with this new matter.

The poetic or doctrinaire Sufi text is versatile and resolutely innovative because it implies a transdisciplinarity and a multidisciplinary. It exceeds time, space and official geographies. The themata and figurae to take over Moscovici are always the same and always different.

Our workshop aims at addressing the dual aspect of this issue of the impact and legitimacy of the use of Sufi references in literary creation, as it is currently happening in the Arab-Muslim world -but not only- in these two following ways:

- Study of contemporary literary works where the Sufi reference is operative.
- Presentation of poetic or doctrinaire Sufi texts with an effort to analyze the Living side that keeps the work speaking in our time.

**Person in charge and discussant: Benslimane Radia (Senior lecturer, University Alger 2, laboratory of LIRADDI)**

### Program

**Islam Abdessamad Betchine (PhD student University Alger 2, LIRADDI Laboratory)**

*The Figure of Emir Abdelkader in The Writings of Riyad Girod*

It seems that Maghrebian literature draws, as fully as possible, on Sufism; many authors are referring, if not to fundamental texts, at least to certain charismatic figures of this spirituality.

Algerian authors are inspired by Sufism, due to the long ancestral tradition inherited from some Muslim masters, after the zaouias side-lining, for a certain while and the reduction of their aura, as a form of unbreakable bond and silent transmission lasting.

Take, for instance, the case of Emir Abdelkader' figure, which reappeared strongly in Maghrebian literature, particularly in the author Riyad Girod, not only as a historical or national figure but as a great Master and a man of an extraordinary spiritual rank: a «madjdoub» and indirect disciple of Ibn Arabi.

In the light of this cultural affiliation, it would be interesting to examine the works common to both to develop the evident and latent marks of a Sufi paradigm. What would be the direct and indirect references evoked in the author's novels in order to give the texts their Sufi significance? What are the deep links that recall the spiritual journey of Emir Abdelkader and even of the Akbarian tradition? What

notions enable us to identify a character displaying the way or inspired by Sufism?

**Massiva Ait Ouarab (Senior lecturer, University Alger 3, LIRADDI Laboratory)**

*Initiation: a process of spiritual realization in the novel of Eric Emmanuel SCHMITT*

The spiritual question seems to take place in contemporary writings. It is represented in the need to know oneself, to know one's creator and or the universe. The world in which we live attributes, indeed, importance to technology and material. Human beings are gradually moving away from their humanity. That's what R.GUENON calls the crisis of the modern world. It is the rejection of tradition in favor of modernity. Some European writers feel the need to update questions related to spirituality and more precisely Muslim spirituality.

Thus, our subject focuses on the novel by Eric Emmanuel SCHMITT, *La nuit de feu*, published by Albin Michel editions in 2015. An autobiographical story in which the narrator recounts his journey in the Algerian desert, a space that allows him to explore the Muslim spiritual dimension through a subtle and progressive process of initiation, expressing himself through the religious behavior of the character of the Tuareg guide, a practicing Muslim. In contact with the latter, questions abound in the narrator's mind and give rise to a real experience that will change his life.

This study seeks to mention how the initiation process is built in the course of the main character; in the light of the work of René Guénon and Abu Hamid El Ghazali, on initiation into Muslim spirituality and more exactly Sufi.

**Radia Benslimane (Senior lecturer, University Alger 2, LIRADDI Laboratory)**

*The theory of the Four Elements of Creation in the Sufi Imagination*

This research paper is intended as a reflection on the complexity of the Sufi Imaginary. It questions precisely the theory of the four elements of creation (earth, fire, air, water), envisaged, especially in the conception of the Sufi Ibn Arabi (1165-1240), from the perspective of the relationship between the sensitive world and the intelligible world. This conception is of great interest and remains to be discovered since the creative process of some literary text is deeply imbued, consciously or not, with Muslim mystical culture.

It is therefore a question of rethinking the Imaginary according to the Sufi Muslim mysticism, by focusing particularly on the thought of Ibn Arabi. To do so, to highlight its specificity, we will compare it with the conception of the Bachelardian imagination.

**Yamilé Ghebalou, (Professor, University Alger 3, LIRADDI Laboratory)**

*Social Imperatives and Visionary Investments: Interrogative Journeys Between Literature and Tariqa Science*

This study revolves around two axes. On the one hand, their essential aims are to question the evolution of tariqa in Algeria and their cultural and sociological presence (through an example). On the other hand, to show how this spiritual substratum leaves its territory of origin, travel and is reworked around the world today. It will thus be worth questioning this literary work made from a material initially intended for spiritual paths, a world meeting certain rules of engagement and restraint which is, however, now staged and shown out, invested with ideas that do not belong to him at the outset, nevertheless, they are interesting and fruitful.

This research relies, therefore, on the poetic texts, but also of science and doctrine, and the biography of the great Saint of Mostaganem Sidi El Alawi, while highlights the current role of the tariqa Alawiya and his Sheikh Sidi Khaled Bentounès, to try to show the realities of a certain Sufism, on the ground in particular by relying on the activities of the NGO AISA whose Sheikh Bentounès is at the origin.

At the same time, this study seeks to show, through reading the novels and poetry of Dib, Abdelwahab Meddeb, Khatibi (as predecessors), Elif Shafak and Rajae Benchemsi, how Sufism is questioned, in what sense and for what issues it is staged in a literary setting, with or without translations. To what extent the use of Sufism in these works is at once a demand to be, a call to create new values, to find «a third way», and the will to give Islam a renewed status of openness and tolerance.