

GRUPO DE ESTUDIOS ARABES (GEAR-DEFIHIS) – ILC SEMINARIO

Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The emergence of the authoritative Sufi guide in the Arab Near East

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By the 13th century the tradition known as Sufism had moved from the margins to the center of scholarly and social life and its version of the prophetic sunna incorporated into mainstream Sunnism. Sufi shaykhs attained mastery of the traditional and legal sciences, tied themselves to the Prophet through unbroken chains of reliable transmitters, and gained recognition as "heirs of the Prophet," revivers of his sunna, alongside 'ulama' of the established legal schools. Still, Sufi shaykhs developed their own tradition and their own methods of centralizing and diffusion of authority. Constructing their authority within their circles of close disciples, particular shaykhs progressively diffused that authority broadly among the population.

In this seminar I will exhibit the characteristic Sufi perception and appropriation of the prophetic model and the distinctive ways of establishing and diffusion of authority applied by particular Sufi shaykhs. My examination will focus on the lives and modes of operation of a number of 13th-century Sufi shaykhs in the Arab Near East who* * were considered as charismatic leaders in Islamic scholarship and piety. Texts from their writings and biographies will form a basis for discussion.