The Islamic resurgence, the onset of which may be traced back to the 1967 Middle East war and which has received a strong impetus from the Iranian revolution, has not only brought a wide range of Islamist and neo-fundamentalist movements into the public sphere of the Muslim world, but also appears to have occasioned a revival of Sufism and related devotional movements. In countries as far apart as Turkey and Indonesia, ‘classical’ Sufi orders such as the Naqshbandiya and the Qadiriyya remain influential and appear even to find new adherents in circles that previously appeared highly secularized. Besides, various religious movements that are not Sufi orders in the strict sense but share certain characteristics with them and have distinctive devotional and disciplining practices have been experiencing significant growth. As examples one may mention the Nurcu movement of Turkey, Malaysia’s Darul Aqam (surviving despite an official ban), and the Tablighi Jama’a, which is of Indian origin but presently one of the most truly transnational religious movements.

Many individual believers who do not themselves follow a specific spiritual discipline, moreover, have taken an intellectual interest in the mystic tradition of Islam, which they believe to be more open, inclusive and tolerant of difference, and which they contrast favourably with ‘fundamentalist’ versions of their religion. Discussion circles, journals and books disseminate Sufi ideas to larger audiences than ever before. Sufi groups cover the entire spectrum from the strictly shari’a-oriented to the latitudinarian, from Muslim puritan to perennialist. There is no strict boundary separating Sufi groups from New Age-type movements—which raises questions of conceptualization as well as sociological explanation.

These and related issues were discussed at the conference ‘Sufism and the ‘Modern’ in Islam’ held in Bogor, Indonesia, on 4-6 September 2003 and was a collaborative effort of the ISIM, Griffith University (Brisbane, Australia) and the Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) of Jakarta’s State Islamic University. The aim of the conference was to explore current developments in Sufism and related movements over the globe.

The conference ‘Sufism and the ‘Modern’ in Islam’ was held in Bogor, Indonesia, on 4-6 September 2003 and was a collaborative effort of the ISIM, Griffith University (Brisbane, Australia) and the Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) of Jakarta’s State Islamic University. The aim of the conference was to explore current developments in Sufism and related movements over the globe.

...