

View from Islam, View from the West

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‘Go in search of knowledge even if it is in China’
(saying attributed to Mohammed)

The East has been upsetting and sometimes even revolutionizing Europeans’ modes of thought, feeling and enjoyment since the most ancient times, well before Marco Polo, when it transmitted its techniques and arts (printing, paper money, the compass, porcelain, etc.). From the 18th century Europe has played a similar role in the technological and even the philosophical field, with regard to India, China and Japan. Apart from the infrequent exchanges between West and East, the transmission of knowledge was carried out through ‘buffer civilizations’ – Persians, Sassanids, the Turkic-Iranian Muslim world – whose languages were Indo-European or whose religion was Abrahamic, and so culturally linked to the West. Thus it was to the east of them that the great frontier between civilizations was situated, in a region that, since around the seventh century, has been dedicated to Islam. The huge Euro-Asian bloc was the arena for several encounters, or clashes, between civilizations which considerably enriched the technical skills, culture and taste of Europeans; the transmission of Greco-Arab knowledge in the 12th century, the contribution of Chinese techniques thanks to the great Asian land routes (christened the Silk Road in the 19th century), the importation of Indian techniques over the sea routes. These encounters were also the occasion for two-way trade that gave a new face to countries like India or Japan; the latter, for instance, opened up not only to western technologies in the Meiji period, but also to the philosophies of Husserl and Heidegger in the early 20th century (the case of the Kyôto School of philosophy should be mentioned). The last of the great encounters date from the late 19th and the 20th centuries at the very moment when Europe and the American world were claiming to be the only ‘civilization’ worthy of the name, and considered they had nothing to learn from others, but, on the contrary, could teach them everything. However, this was also the time when a deepening knowledge of India, China,

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Korea, Japan led to a 'rediscovery' of Asia as a continent of great and rich civilizations whose philosophies, arts and many other disciplines were a match for their European counterparts; the French writer Henri Michaux described himself as a 'barbarian' when he visited that part of the world at the beginning of the 20th century.¹

At the turn of the 19th century European thought became clearly aware that Indian, Chinese, Central Asian and Japanese thought were opening new horizons and occasionally revolutionizing its world view. Yoga, whose psychosomatic techniques fascinated Jung and aroused the interest of many researchers, was the subject of several study visits to India made by Dr Thérèse Brosse between 1935 and 1960 with the support of the French Ministry of Education and in association with the Harvard Research Center in Creative Altruism (Harvard University) and the École Française d'Extrême-Orient (French Foreign Ministry). Thérèse Brosse was mainly trying to demonstrate that the yogi's experience is one that surpasses our understanding and she measured certain physical manifestations with scientific instruments. She concluded that the key element of the Yoga issue was 'the mystery of the breath': 'breathing must hold deep biological secrets for human science and Yoga offers us a unique opportunity to decipher its difficult lessons'.² Breathing, air, energy; these three elements, which are just one, also appear at the heart of Chinese and Japanese thought. Breathing not only fulfils a central function in the exercises designed to explore the mind, in Yoga, Taoism or Zen; in fact it runs through the whole of eastern thought and is carried over into Islam, from there reaching the shores of the Mediterranean. Indeed Chinese statues and painting refer to a 'breathing body and human beings are represented primarily in their gait, their movement'; they are 'bodies traversed by breaths that are circulating constantly'.³ The philosopher François Jullien exploits this discovery to the full and his in-depth knowledge of both Chinese and European thought leads him to compare western philosophy, a 'philosophy of the object' ruled by the prejudice of perception, with Chinese philosophy, which he describes as a 'philosophy of breathing'. His discovery in China of a real 'reverse image of Europe' helps him reconsider western philosophy: 'I combine the perspectives from my own itinerary as a student of China and philosophy', he writes, 'I think one system of thought within the other, I interrogate a way of thinking through the other . . .'.⁴ Is it possible to find as effective a looking-glass for civilizations as the method adopted by this thinker?

For some decades now Europe and the Americas have been very keen to learn about the breathing body as taught by the Chinese art of T'ai chi, a school of watchful attention and slow movement. It is a great novelty for a West whose relationship to the body has long been problematic and where the body, which embodies evil and sin, has never been a medium for a philosophical or spiritual experience of the world. A reconciliation with the body is now permitted thanks to the introduction of Yoga, Tai Chi, Indian, Chinese and Japanese martial arts and the animal dances of shamanism accepted by some strands of Sufism into Islam.⁵ In another field Dr Jean Schatz (who died in 1984 and was the founder of the European school of acupuncture) wrote that 'the coming together of traditional Chinese medicine, acupuncture in particular, and so-called western medicine is one of the great medical events of the twentieth century'.⁶ And acupuncture is wholly constructed around a science of

energy-breath, the yin–yang pair and managing factors of atmosphere, seasons, times, environment, atmospheric conditions. It is the therapeutic art of the ‘breathing body’. This medical tradition subsequently took root in Korea, Japan, South-east Asia and Tibet and in a simplified form spread as far as the nomadic peoples of Central Asia and into Muslim territory, reaching Anatolia and the Mediterranean with the great migrations and invasions. The Indian medical tradition shares with the Chinese tradition the theory of breath and breathing and is closely connected with Yoga. In addition a Muslim medicine is known in India that is at the crossroads between Indian Ayurvedic and Greek medicine (*yunani*); it acts in several areas: medicine proper, cuisine and diet. Tibetan medicine, which is quite complex, borrows from the Chinese and Indian traditions and is an ‘art of living’ with ethical, aesthetic and cultural dimensions. We should note that around the end of the 19th and the start of the 20th century a Russian of Bouriat origin, P. Badmaev, educated in a Tibetan monastery in his home region, opened a ‘Lamaic’ clinic in St Petersburg. Apart from their genuine effectiveness, eastern medicines, wrote Fernand Meyer, ‘far exceed the notion of medicine in the strict sense in which we have become accustomed to thinking of it’; they are ‘systems integrated into a given society’: ‘what in a given society might be considered as extreme vitality (the often frenetic agitation of western societies, for example) and an element of success, may be perceived elsewhere as a morbid state requiring treatment’.⁷

In recent years Francisco Varela has studied Indian thought in the context of cognitive science. His project is to ‘build a bridge between the mind according to science and the mind according to lived experience by establishing a dialogue between the tradition of western cognitive science and that of meditative Buddhist psychology’. In the course of his research he concluded that ‘the rediscovery of Asian philosophy, and in particular Buddhist tradition, is a second renaissance in the cultural history of the West, and its impact will be as great as that of the rediscovery of Greek thought for the European renaissance’. His work deals more especially with the Buddhist method of examining the experience he calls ‘mindfulness meditation’. And finally he sees the contribution of Indian philosophy as a ‘natural complement to contemporary cognitivist conceptions of the mind’.⁸ Coming from a different discipline, the psychoanalyst and psychotherapist François Roustang agrees with cognitivists and psychologists who have acknowledged the rich contribution of India and China to the sciences of the mind. He finds in his practice of hypnotherapy the ‘non-action’ of the Chinese sage, who is often Taoist, and he points out the link that exists between the therapeutic ideas of hypnosis and Chinese thought. He demonstrates that Chinese culture finds it less difficult than ours to shake off the habits that our senses impose on us, and that it apprehends the real more sharply.⁹

In quite a different area, the East teaches us another relationship to nature than one based on domination and possession; it is a relationship of sharing and working with it. Chinese and Japanese painting, the art of the garden, help us to understand this bond between human beings and nature; beneath the painter-gardener’s pen the image of the ‘breathing individual’ appears connected to the breath of the earth and sky. Japanese culture excels in its attempt to codify its relationship with nature and even its effort to invent a landscape in the search for a lost nature. Furthermore

the Japanese are sensitive to the 'flower surge', the plum-trees flowering, then the cherry-trees, and in autumn the retreat of the red maples, the splendid *momiji*. Europeans, whose gardens are generally 'architectural, geometric, orderly', may find an opportunity to reconsider their connection with nature when they discover the Japanese garden, 'natural and like a landscape', for which the model is Japanese nature 'confused and untidy'.¹⁰

Thus clashes of civilization have a positive dimension, *pace* S. P. Huntington. They give Europeans the chance to reflect on their cultural, philosophical, religious, medical, biological traditions, not from the inside but from the outside, having first learnt from the Other, which is not superior or inferior to them but different in essence. Above all they are lucky enough to experience a meeting where each may view itself in the Other's mirror. The role of passing on knowledge that was played by the Muslim peoples living in Asia, between East and West, increased the number of mirrors. It is this role as intermediary between civilizations played by Asian Islam that I should like to present in the following pages.

Islam as a transmitter of knowledge

When the theologian Albert the Great discovered all the Greco-Arab scholarship in the 13th century and pounced upon it, as the historian Gilson writes, 'with the joyful appetite of a merry colossus',¹¹ Europe witnessed a huge intellectual revolution and experienced its first *clash of civilizations*, but it was a clash which helped to turn it into a *civilization*. Thanks to the Arabs and via Islam, Europeans discovered Plato and Aristotle, chemistry, arithmetic, astronomy and medicine. This was the basis for our present modernity. Muslim civilization later declined when Christianity got the upper hand. However, because of its geographical position east of Europe and west of Asia, the Muslim world continued to act as an intermediary between the civilizations: it surveyed the horizon from west to east, towards China and India. It reached out with its questioning and exploration, and over the centuries absorbed knowledge and usage – Ayurvedic medicine, Indian dietetics, Chinese energy medicine and martial arts, yoga, etc. – that Europe has discovered only recently and scarcely absorbed, if at all. Indeed Islam controlled the caravan routes that brought the Mediterranean closer to Central Asia, China and India. This vast territory corresponds to the 'greater Mediterranean' of Fernand Braudel, who stresses that Islam held 'the routes that had to be taken between Europe and the Far East' and that it lived off its 'profitable function as intermediary'.¹²

And Islam is doubly western; first geographically, owing to its position on the map of Asia, then intellectually, because it is a pupil of the Greeks and follower of a revealed religion. So the view from Islam towards China and India and its reading of those two eastern civilizations is an extension of Europeans' view and thus a contact and exchange with another who is neither Greek nor Abrahamic. In a way Muslim civilization moves the Aristotelian mode of thought and the sensibility of the peoples of the Book eastward. Encounters, cross-fertilization with Chinese and Indian scholarship, philosophies or wisdom, undergone by Muslims over centuries, are experiences Europeans would have had if they had been in their position. The

experience Muslims had of China and India was therefore also, in a certain sense, the Christians' and Jews' experience.

For more than a thousand years Islam has been acting as an intermediary between the Christian world and the great civilizations of Asia. It is represented by various peoples; by the Arabs, small numbers of whom invasions or trade took as far as eastern Turkistan, the gates of China, the coasts of India, China and the Indonesian archipelago, and who mixed with the locals; and especially by a section of the Asian peoples, Turks, Chinese, Indians, Tibetans, etc., who became Muslim. In both cases Islam acted as an interface for communication and the transfer of civilizations. In the case of an eastern people who embraced Islam, that religion became for them an initiation into the West and encouraged them to reach out to the West. But even if that people became in a sense 'western' via Islam, all the same they never stopped being eastern; that is confirmed by the Confucian and Taoist foundations of Chinese Muslims, the Hindu basis of Indian Muslims and the Buddhist, animist and shamanist base of Turkic Muslims. Thus their mental categories are forever out of sync, working either according to the Aristotelian hypothetical-deductive model that exists in Muslim law and theology, or according to eastern myth, aphorism or paradox.

In this study we shall look mainly at Islam's exchanges with the two great Asian cultural blocs, India and China. The points of contact I have chosen to analyse are not the only ones, and in this field there are many areas that await their explorers.

The long contact with Buddhism

Arab, Turkic and Iranian Muslims do not have a good knowledge of the thought and philosophy of the Buddhists who were their adversaries in Afghanistan, Central Asia and eastern Turkistan from the seventh to the 15th century. However, they were aware of certain aspects of their medicine, literature, magic and astronomy.¹³ As early as the period of the Mongols of Iran (14th century) Muslim mystics recognized the validity of Indian ascetics' spiritual experience. The two religions began to infiltrate each other, though several points in Buddhist belief remained unacceptable for Muslims, as they would also have been for Jews or Christians: in particular the representation of the substantial union (*ittihâd*) and the transmigration of souls (*tanâsukh*).¹⁴ But Buddhism was extremely open and ready to acknowledge in other religions paths leading to a common reality; it was one of the few religions to advocate supra-confessionalism.¹⁵

Over the centuries Turkic Muslims from Central Asia were from their early childhood told tales permeated by Buddhist themes. Thus their principal literary monument – the *Kutadghu Bilig* (The Wisdom of Royal Glory), composed in Kachgar, eastern Turkistan, in the eighth century – is an Islamic adaptation of the Buddhist parable of the prince who gives up his power and wealth and turns to the ascetic life in the search for liberation. This prince is Siddhârtha Gautama, who became the Buddha. The parable of the prince-ascetic is taken up by Sufi literature and we find a Muslim prince from the Buddhist town of Balkh in Afghanistan, Ibrahim Edhem (ninth century), who abandons his throne and takes the habit of the Muslim mystics.

In another tale it is recounted that a gazelle encourages a young prince, who is engaged in hunting, to give up his favourite sport and 'become aware' in order to understand, before he dies, why he has come into the world. The story is clearly inspired by a Buddhist hagiography (*jataka*) in the Uighur Turkic language that tells the story of King Dantipala, a merciless hunter guilty of killing a golden stag who is no other than the Buddha; because of this, and though he repents, he perishes amid great suffering. In an Islamic and Kazakh version of this tale the Buddha is replaced by Mohammed. These various tales are Turkic versions of the Arabic text *Kitâb Bilawhar wa Yûdâsaf*, probably composed in Central Asia from a Manichaean model that would later be the inspiration for the Christian legend of Barlaam and Josaphat via its translations into Georgian and Greek.¹⁶ So, by appropriating part of the Buddhist folk heritage, Turko-Iranian Islam opened to the rest of the West an access route to this Asian religion. It proceeded not by a direct approach to its great religious and philosophical texts, but by a gradual initiation into its conception of the world and the part that humans were to play in it, as laid out in the mythologies intended for the edification of the simple and the great.

The encounter between Islam and the Chinese and Indian East did not occur only in the field of scholarship and ideas; it was also fixed by stone and inspired aesthetics. The best example is probably the Buddhist monastery, the *vihara*, which, in Central Asia and soon the whole of the Muslim world, gave its model to the Muslim religious school, the *madrasa*: in both cases the building is constructed on a plan with four *iwan*¹⁷ arranged round a central courtyard. In the area of aesthetics A. S. Melikian-Chirvani showed in 1974¹⁸ that the image of pure beauty in Persian literature is Buddhist in origin; the 'face or forehead the colour of the moon', which recalls that of the Buddha, the garden with trees adorned with jewels reminiscent of the paradise of Amitâbha, etc. Among the Ottoman Turks it was the 'Chinese cloud' (*çinbulutu*) that came to dominate in 15th-century ornamental art, transmitted by Tamerlan and the Herat architecture school.¹⁹ Thus, over the centuries, taste and eye became accustomed to the flavour of the eastern image.

Medicine at the crossroads between civilizations

Still more surprisingly, certain practices from Chinese medicine were adopted by the Muslim Turks of Central Asia, most likely a legacy from their Buddhist ancestors; they subsequently took them as far as the shores of the Mediterranean. In the ninth century in Khorasan (north-east Iran) a Turkish doctor was already using cauterization as a treatment in accordance with the well-known system of moxas, heating the acupuncture points to tone the corresponding 'meridian'. Later, in a mid-15th-century Ottoman text, an author explains a similar procedure with the aid of drawings that show a turbaned patient whose body displays the routes of the meridians with their acupuncture points. Such cauterizations are still practised today in Anatolia in popular medicine.²⁰ European scholars discovered acupuncture in the late 17th century but did not start to practise it till the beginning of the 20th.²¹ Thus, well before Europe, Islam discovered a new vision of the human body criss-crossed by energy channels, which it partially combined with that of Arab medicine. In

another area the medicine of the Muslim Uighurs from Xinjiang, in the far west of China, today mixes in procedures inspired by Greek medicine, which it inherited via Arab medicine and Chinese herbalism, using both plants that grow in the oases on the Silk Road and simples imported from the China of the Eighteen Provinces.²²

Just as Turkic Muslims from Central Asia welcomed Chinese energy medicine, Indian Muslims gave a favourable reception to the meeting between the Greek and Arab medical tradition and Ayurvedic medicine. The Muslims of Ahmedabad, for example, adopted into their culinary practices the Ayurvedic theory of the classification of substances into five types associated respectively with the five elements of Indian tradition – ether, air, fire, water, earth. Identifying them allowed a harmonious combination of substances in food preparation and thus linked the culinary art with medicine, which became the science of dietetics. Traditional Muslim medicine with its sorbets, pastries and sweetmeats was combined with Ayurvedic medicine; it became impossible to be a doctor without knowing cookery or a master chef without knowing medicine.²³

The subtle body of the yogas

An exceptional figure, Dara Shikuh, played a unique part in bringing together Muslim and Indian thought. Being both a Mughal prince and a Sufi he was an expert in the two cultures and had an excellent knowledge of Sanskrit and Persian. He compared Hindu and Sufi philosophies and noticed, writes the Indianist Jean Filliozat,²⁴ ‘convergence of the theological ideas and aspirations motivating the two huge communities that were distinct but coexisting, convergence of spiritual individuals who were pursuing the same ideal of rejecting attachment to the world in order to approach the One God’. But his efforts especially concerned the problem of seeking Persian equivalents for the philosophical Indian terms and translating the *Upanishads*, the founding texts of Hindu metaphysics.²⁵ It was the first time that such an attempt to compare Indian mystical thought and Sufism had been undertaken. Another less substantial one is known about in 18th-century Bengal, but it deals more with the mode of adapting hatha yoga and tantric exercises in the context of Sufi practice. Yoga exercises, the postures (*asana*), the control of the breath and the emission of seminal fluid, the repetition of sacred words, had been known throughout the Muslim world since the 14th century at least, thanks to a famous text, the *Amratkunda*, which had been translated into Arabic, then Persian, Turkish and Urdu.²⁶ It is true that the celebrated Patanjali *yoga sutras* had been translated as early as the 11th century but in truncated form and with limited dissemination. The Bengali ‘yoga Sufi’ (*Yoga Qalandar*), according to the title of the work where he is described,²⁷ compares the subtle points of the body (*chakras*) with the *maqâm* (stations) of Sufism and details several postures, similar to *yogasana*, that are adopted during the Sufi exercise *dhikr* (mental repetition).²⁸

Some Indian Sufi brotherhoods such as Chishtiyya and Shattariyya institutionalized yoga techniques, convinced as they were of their efficacy. Nevertheless, the vast majority of their followers were sure that Sufis could go further than yogis because they belonged to Islam, which was considered a superior religion to Hinduism.²⁹ In

the 15th century the Sufi Abd al-Quddus Gangohi even recommended, as one of the most suitable for the practice of *dhikr*, a posture inspired by hatha yoga in which the body is turned upside down and suspended by the heels, a posture he calls 'inverted prayer' (*namaz-i ma'kûs*). This same Sufi also had himself buried alive for several months in order to demonstrate his power over the process of death.³⁰ However, adopting the yogas did not bring Islam and Hinduism any closer together and, especially for Muslims, did not allow any kind of supra-confessionalism, save in certain exceptional cases. Despite the fact that discord reigned between Indian Sufis and Hindus on the nature of the goal to be attained, nevertheless there was consensus on the means employed to reach it. Thus contact with India considerably enriched the science of exploring the mind, which was poorly developed in the West, among Muslims in general and Sufis in particular. Their practice of the yogas is an experience that is nearly a thousand years old and that the West would be misguided not to study closely.³¹

In rare cases the subtle Indian physiology penetrated into Islam, as has been seen with Chinese energy among the Turks of Central Asia; an Indian Persian text indicates that, for the members of the Chishtiyya brotherhood, three of the subtle points on the body (*latîfa*), called *ingal* and *pingal*, points on which the Sufi's effort at concentration is focused, are situated below the navel to the right and left of it respectively. Equidistant from both these points is a third called *sangmana*.³² This is a recognition of the main channels (*nâdi*) for distributing the vital energy of hatha yoga: *idâ* and *pingalâ* are on the right and left of the spine, which houses a central channel, the *susumnâ*. But in general the subtle points of Sufism (*latîfa*) cannot be identified with the *chakras* of the yogi and the tantrists. Whereas the latter – situated along the spine – belong to a complex network for distributing vital energy, the former – situated above and below both the nipples, at the throat and on the top of the skull – do not owe their position to any type of subtle physiology. On the other hand, they are both points for focusing the attention and moving the mind.

Other unexpected crossovers occurred. Forms of popular Islam such as the cult of saints and certain strands of Sufism are at the heart of these encounters. For instance, the tombs of Muslim saints in India receive flowers as an offering just as Hindu divinities do. As for the concert of sacred music (*qavvâlî*) that takes place at these sites during festivals, it is reminiscent of Hindu devotional chants.³³ In the same way the cult of saints in Central Asia is a repository of beliefs and practices inherited from the animism and shamanism of the ancient Turks, and in China the offering to saints is incense, as in Taoist temples.

Both Muslim and Confucian

The exchanges between Islam and the Chinese world are particularly rich owing to the influence of Confucian traditions on a Chinese Muslim community (the Hui), which today comprises almost ten million souls and is well established right in the middle of the country.

On the architectural level the Hui's mosque adopts the model of the Chinese temple and conforms to Chinese regularity, as is shown by the Xian mosque, the

largest in the country, or the one in the street of the Ox in Beijing, which celebrated a thousand years of existence in 1998. The adoption by Islam of Chinese architectural values means that it partially absorbs the rich cosmogony of the Empire of the Middle Kingdom and obeys the rules of Chinese geomancy, *fengshui*. Chinese Muslims are Confucian as well as Muslim; furthermore, the ethics of Confucius is acknowledged in that of the Koran and a Hui philosopher did not hesitate to borrow from Chinese tradition the theory of yin and yang mutations to explain Islamic cosmogony. Similarly, Chinese Sufis use Confucian and Taoist terminology to translate the Arabic and Persian classics into their language.³⁴ These *rapprochements* do not stop Islam rejecting several practices and beliefs that are in conflict with Muslim law.

An even more surprising adaptation of Islam to Chinese traditions appears in the martial arts that are partly Islamized. Chinese Muslims (the Hui) are aware that they have borrowed their martial art (*wushu*) from the Han Chinese, but they maintain they have given it a particular form by rejecting certain techniques and adding new ones. Boxing used to be practised for defence but today it serves to maintain health. The forms of combat that are practised have names inspired by Islam. One is *chaquan* (*cha* boxing), a form that legend says was developed by a western Muslim called Chamianer or Chamier, who was probably of Uighur origin. The form begins and ends with a Muslim prayer. Another form, *xinyiquan* (heart and will boxing), which is also called Hui boxing, is performed slowly. It is similar to *Bagua*, which is based on the eight trigrammic symbols of Taoism. Among the weapons used in this martial art, besides traditional Chinese weapons – sabre, sword, stick, lance, knife – there is the whip, which belongs to the world of the steppes. This martial art is defined according to Islamic norms. Some forms such as monkey boxing are forbidden (because Islam is opposed to the idea that there is a similarity between man and monkey) and styles alluding to the drunken state (drunken man boxing) for reasons that are easy to guess at. The Hui also refuse to practise some forms that are clearly influenced by Buddhism such as *shaolin* boxing, but do not reject Taoist forms of boxing, for example *T'ai chi chuan* and *Bagua zhang*. In addition they think of these types of boxing as simple physical exercises and not as spiritual disciplines. The Hui also do *qigong* (breathing and meditation exercises). Originally boxing was practised inside mosques; nowadays it is performed in their courtyards during religious festivals. The martial art is passed on by families of masters who conform to the model of the *isnâd*, a traditional Muslim chain of authority and kinship. Legend dates Chinese boxing from the time of the prophet Mohammed and relates that he was an expert in the art. The most Islamized form of boxing is called *tangpinggong*, meaning washpot exercise. The pot in question resembles a small watering-can well known among Muslims, who use it to perform their ablutions. The body adopts the shape of this object in the course of the practice; the exercise is not a series of active movements but, like *qigong*, consists of several so-called meditative postures that are used to stimulate energy, or *chi*. However, the origins of *tangpinggong* are shrouded in mystery.³⁵ Surely we must recognize an Islamic version of Taoism in the inner practices of this Muslim form of boxing?

And so Islam, adopted by Turks, Indians and Chinese, assumes two faces: one is turned towards Mecca and thinks in Greek; the other towards the original traditions of these peoples, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Taoism. The Muslim, and

therefore western, identity of these communities is for westerners a point of contact that is especially appropriate as it corresponds to Europeans' mental categories and so allows them to progress down a conceptual path that is already waymarked towards a greater understanding of Indian and Chinese cultures. Thus Islam's thousand-year-old experience in this field deserves to be considered and it will certainly be realized that the Muslim world, in the course of its travels eastwards, has grasped certain finer points of the eastern mind that the Jews, Christians and Muslims of the Far West have not managed to detect and maybe never will, despite their contacts with the East, which nowadays are direct and immediate but nevertheless recent.

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Translated from the French by Jean Burrell

Notes

1. *Un barbare en Asie*, 1932, reissued Paris, Gallimard, 1995.
2. *Études instrumentales des techniques du Yoga/Expérimentation psychosomatique*, Paris, École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1976, p. 123.
3. Catherine Despueux, *Immortelles de la Chine ancienne. Taoïsme et alchimie féminine*, Paris, Pardès, 1990, p. 189.
4. *De l'Essence ou du Nu*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 2000, p. 57.
5. See Thierry Zarcone, 'Interpénétration du soufisme et du chamanisme dans l'aire turque: "chamanisme soufisé et soufisme chamanisé"', in D. Aigle, B. Brac de la Perrière & J.-P. Chaumeil (eds), *La Politique des esprits. Chamanismes et religions universalistes*, Nanterre (Paris), Société d'ethnologie, 2000, pp. 383–96, and, by the same author, 'Le "Brâme du saint". De la prouesse du chamane au miracle du soufi', in D. Aigle (ed.), *Miracle et Karama. Hagiographies médiévales comparées*, Paris, Éditions Brépols & EPHE, 2000, pp. 413–33.
6. *Aperçus de médecine chinoise traditionnelle*, 1979, reissued Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1998, p. 11.
7. *Gso-ba Rig-pa, Le système médical tibétain*, Paris, Presses du CNRS, 1988, p. 9, 25–6.
8. Francisco Varela et al., *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*, Cambridge, MA, MIT, 1991.
9. *Qu'est-ce que l'hypnose?*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1994, pp. 151–81.
10. Augustin Berque, *Le Sauvage et l'artifice. Les Japonais devant la nature*, Paris, Gallimard, 1986, pp. 30–2, 111.
11. *La Philosophie au moyen âge. Des origines patristiques à la fin du XIVe siècle*, Paris, Payot, 1947, p. 504.
12. *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1990, vol. 1, p. 226.
13. Daniel Gimaret, 'Bouddha et les bouddhistes dans la tradition musulmane', *Journal asiatique*, CCLVII, 1969.
14. Marijan Molé, 'Les Kubrawiyya entre sunnisme et shiisme aux huitième et neuvième siècles de l'hégire', *Revue des Études islamiques*, XXIX, 1961, pp. 78–82.
15. See David Alain Scott, 'The Iranian Face of Buddhism', *East and West* (Rome), 40, 1–4 December 1990, pp. 44–5.
16. Daniel Gimaret, *Le Livre de Bilawhar et Bûdâsf selon la version arabe ismaélienne*, Paris, Droz, 1971; Yûsuf Khâss Hâjib, *Wisdom of Royal Glory: A Turko-Islamic Mirror for Princes*, Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 1983, pp. 13–15; Farid-ud-Din 'Attar, *Le Mémorial des saints* (translated

- by A. Pavet de Courteille), Paris, Seuil, 1976, pp. 113–14; T. Zarcone, 'Le "Brâme du saint"'. De la prouesse du chamane au miracle du soufi'.
17. A vaulted room with only one side open to the outside.
 18. 'L'Evocation littéraire du bouddhisme dans l'Iran musulman', in *Le Monde iranien et l'islam. Sociétés et cultures*, Geneva and Paris, Droz, 1974, pp. 51–65.
 19. Aziz Goğanay, 'Osmanlı Mîmârisinde Tezyînat' (Decoration in Ottoman architecture), in *Osmanlı Kültür ve Sanat*, Ankara, Yeni Türkiye, 2000, vol. XI, p. 326 (in Turkish).
 20. Ali Haydar Bayat, 'Türk Tıp Tarihinde Akupunktur ve Moksa (Daglama) Tedavisi' (Treatment with moxa and acupuncture in the history of Turkish medicine), *Tıp Tarihi Arashtirmalari* (Istanbul), 3, 1989, pp. 56–61 (in Turkish).
 21. George Soulié de Morant, 'L'Acupuncture chinoise', *Mercur de France*, April 1932; reissued in G. Soulié de Morant, *Acupuncture* (Communications 1929–1951), Paris, Éditions de la Maisnie, 1972, pp. 45–64.
 22. Nemätulla Öbäydulla, 'Yäkän Uyghur Tibabätchilikining Qisqichä Tarikhi' [A brief history of Uighur medicine in Yarkand], in *Yäkän Tarikhi Materiyalari* (Yarkand), 1, 1990, pp. 158–73 (in Uighur Turkic).
 23. Delphine Roger, 'The Influence of the Indo-Persian Medical Tradition on Muslim Cookery in Hyderabad, India', in F. Delvoeye (ed.), *Confluence of Culture: French Contribution to Indo-Persian Studies*, New Delhi, Manohar, 1994, pp. 217–36.
 24. 'Sur les contreperties indiennes du soufisme', *Journal asiatique*, 1980, fasc. 3–4, p. 266.
 25. This text was translated into French by Daryush Shayegan with the title *Hindouisme et Soufisme. Une lecture du 'confluent des deux océans'*, Paris, Albin Michel [1979], 1997.
 26. Yusuf Husain, 'Haud al-Hayat. La version arabe de l'Amratkund', *Journal asiatique*, October–December 1928, pp. 291–344.
 27. The term 'qalandar', a name given to wandering Sufis in Muslim lands, is a generic term for Sufism in Bengal.
 28. Muhammad Enamul-Haq, *A History of Sufism in Bengal*, Dacca, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1975, pp. 378–422.
 29. See Carl W. Ernst, 'Chistî Meditation Practices of the Later Mughal Period', in L. Lewisohn and D. Morgan (eds), *The Heritage of Sufism in India: Late Classical Persianate Sufism (1501–1750)* III, Oxford, Oneworld, 1999.
 30. See S. Athar Abbas Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, New Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1986, vol. 1, pp. 342–9; Simon Digby, 'Abd al-Quddus Gangohi (1456–1537 AD): the Personality and Attitudes of a Medieval Indian Sufi', in *Medieval India: A Miscellany*, Aligarh, Centre of Advanced Study, Aligarh Muslim University, 1975, pp. 20, 38.
 31. I have assumed a deconfessionalized Sufism as a path to knowledge, without any God or Being to be known, in my article: 'Y-a-t-il une gnose sufie?', in N. Depraz and J.-F. Marquet (eds), *La Gnose, une question philosophique*, Paris, Cerf, 2000, pp. 111–20.
 32. The Persian text is published by Marijan Molé in 'Naqshbandiyya. Quelques traités naqshbandis. I', *Farhang-i Irân-i Zamin*, Tehran, 6, 1959, pp. 317–18.
 33. Denis Matringe, '[Le Culte des saints] au Pakistan', in H. Chambert Loir and C. Guillot (eds), *Le Culte des saints dans le monde musulman*, Paris, École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1995, p. 182; Madhu Trivedi, 'Hindustani Music and Dance: An Examination of Some Texts in the Indo-Persian Tradition', in M. Alam, N. Delvoeye and M. Gaborieau (eds), *The Making of the Indo-Persian Culture, Indian and French Studies*, New Delhi, Manohar, 2000, pp. 288–90.
 34. Zhao Dongdong, 'La Pensée musulmane chinoise et le confucianisme', in *Études orientales*, 13–14, 1994, pp. 70–6; Hung-i Chuang and Su-chun Cheng, 'Les Conceptions cosmologiques d'un alim chinois du XVIIe siècle', *Études orientales*, 13–14, 1994, pp. 77–80; Sachiko Murata, *Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2000, pp. 7–10.
 35. Helenan Hallenberg, 'Muslim Martial Arts in China: Tangping (Washing Cans) and Self-Defence', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2002, pp. 149–75; *Wushu Among Chinese Muslims*, Beijing, China Sports, 1984.