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The Dervishes

An American diplomat and self-taught scholar of the history and languages of the Islamic world, John Porter Brown (1814–72) published in 1868 this illustrated account of the Dervish orders of the Near East. Assisted closely by followers of this Sufi ascetic path while in Constantinople, Brown based his research on original Turkish, Arabic and Persian manuscripts. The work also includes extracts from other scholarly works on Dervish history, fleshing out this engaging introduction to a devout way of life and the philosophy underpinning it. As a Freemason, Brown was struck by the relationship between some Masonic and Dervish tenets, and he highlights parallels between the Christian and Islamic faiths in order to forge a better understanding of the traditions and beliefs of the people of the Near East for the benefit of Western readers.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-05551-2 - The Dervishes Or, Oriental Spiritualism
John P. Brown
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The Dervishes

Or, Oriental Spiritualism

JOHN P. BROWN



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Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108055512

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2013

This edition first published 1868

This digitally printed version 2013

ISBN 978-1-108-05551-2 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

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THE DERVISHES;
OR,
ORIENTAL SPIRITUALISM.

By JOHN P. BROWN,
SECRETARY AND DRAGOMAN OF THE LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA AT CONSTANTINOPLE.



THE MEVLEVEE SHEIKH OF PERA, CONSTANTINOPLE.

With Twenty-four Illustrations.

LONDON:
TRÜBNER AND CO.
1868.

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PREFACE.

THE object of this volume is to afford information in regard to the Belief and Principles of the Dervishes, as well as to describe their various modes of worshipping the Creator.

That the Spiritual Principles of the Dervish Orders existed in Arabia previous to the time of the great and talented Islam Prophet cannot be doubted. The historical portions of the Old and New Testaments were also well known among the Arabs, differing traditionally, however, in many respects from the narratives of the Sacred Writings ; and if a conjecture may be made as to the starting point of Islamism, we would say that it originated in the act of perfect submission of Abraham to the will of the Almighty, when he determined to offer up his son Isaac in obedience to the Divine command.

The spiritualism of the Dervishes differing in many respects from Islamism, and having its origin in the religious conceptions of India and Greece, perhaps the information I have been enabled to collect together on the subject may not be without interest to the reader. Much of this is original ; and having been extracted from Oriental works, and from Turkish, Arabic, and Persian MSS., may be relied upon as strictly accurate. In procuring materials from original sources, valuable assistance has been rendered me by personal friends,

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members of various Dervish Orders in this capital, to whom I would here express my thanks. Notwithstanding the unfavourable opinion entertained by many—principally in the Christian world—against their religious principles, I must, in strict justice, add that I have found these persons liberal and intelligent, sincere, and most faithful friends.

In the extracts from the works of other authors, some of whom are too well known to the public to require more than to be named by me—D’Ohsson, Sir William Jones, Malcolm, Lane, Ubicini, and De Gobineau—some differences will be perceived, mostly with regard to the estimate placed by each of these upon the character and influence of “The Dervishes” in the Mussulman world. To these eminent authors I am under great obligations, and take the present opportunity of acknowledging them.

To the kindness of Dr. Rost, the secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society, in getting my little work through the press, I am more deeply indebted than I can here properly express.

As a book of reference, I trust that this imperfect work will prove of some use; and travellers in the East will perhaps be enabled to learn from it much that would be otherwise obscure and hidden from their knowledge. Much more could have been added to it, especially with regard to the Dervish Orders in the more distant parts of Asia, India, and Africa; but I hope that some one more competent than myself will collect the information which was beyond my reach.

THE AUTHOR.

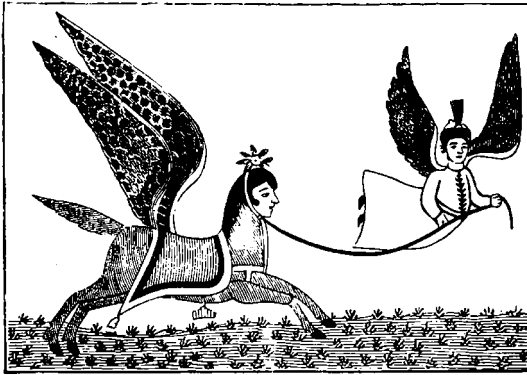
CONSTANTINOPLE, *October 1867.*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05551-2 - The Dervishes Or, Oriental Spiritualism

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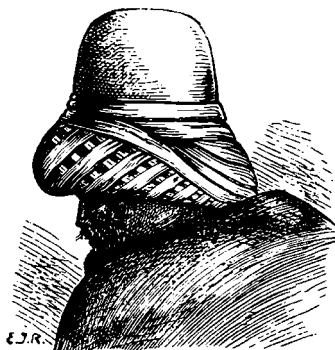
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