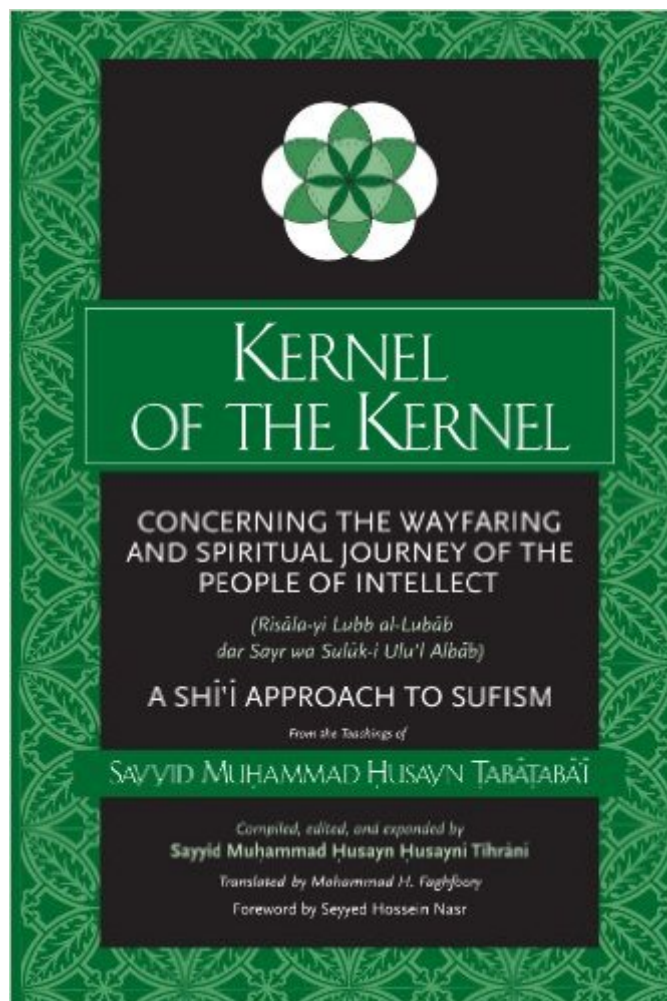


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Kernel Of The Kernel (Suny Series In Islam)



Synopsis

An English translation of a seminal book on Sufism from a Shi'i perspective by an eminent Muslim thinker. *Kernel of the Kernel* is an authoritative work on Sufism from a Shi'i perspective that is not only fascinating, but also contains much practical advice. In addition to providing a theoretical discussion of spiritual wayfaring, it is also the account of a personal fifty-year spiritual journey by Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, a renowned Iranian-Shii scholar and spiritual master. In *Kernel of the Kernel*, Tabataba'i discusses the doctrinal foundations of spiritual wayfaring as well as processes and stages that an aspiring wayfarer must go through in order to attain spiritual realization. He discusses the relation between the exoteric and esoteric aspects of Islam and clearly demonstrates that these inward and outward dimensions of Islam complement each other. The book also provides information on the Quranic origins of Sufism and its special relations with Shi'ism as well as the role of Shi'i Imams in the spiritual realization of a sincere wayfarer.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a fascinating but somewhat repetitive treatise on mysticism, written from a Shia Muslim perspective. The book is written in the form of a commentary by Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Husayni Tihrani on a work by Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai. Both were prominent Shia clerics in Iran. The foreword to the English translation is authored by renowned Traditionalist writer Seyyed Hossein Nasr. This may be seen as controversial, since Nasr supported the Shah, while Tihrani and Tabatabai were followers of Ayatollah Khomeini! But then, the purpose of the work is

strictly religious. It's published by SUNY Press. What struck me when reading *Kernel of the Kernel* was the similarity between the Shia mystical path and many others. To a Westerner, parallels with Hinduism are most obvious, since Hindu traditions have been introduced to the West for over a century now. Of course, I'm not talking about the Hindu polytheist pantheon, which all Muslims would denounce, but of the mystical path itself. Perhaps right-handed Tantrism is the closest parallel? The Shia mystic must annihilate his separate personality, becoming completely fused with God. Yet, the mystic nevertheless remains physically present as a human being on the material plane. The Shia Muslim Imams are said to have attained this exalted state, the highest a human can reach. Therefore, the Imams are perfect reflections of God. Comparisons to both Jesus in Christianity and Tantric saints in Hinduism suggest themselves here. The authors emphasize that a mystic must always follow the sharia, but only for the sake of the non-mystical masses. The mystic himself has moved beyond the sharia.

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