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## STUDIES

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## Khānaqāh

**Khānaqāh** (or *khānqāh*) is a Persian word for the place where Muslim mystics gather. It was, and still is, used mainly in Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia, western China, and the Indian subcontinent. Other terms were more common elsewhere, such as *zāwiya* in Arab lands, Africa, and Indonesia, and *tekke* in Turkey and the Balkans. All these terms are often interchangeable.

Usually translated as "Sūfī lodge" (rather than "convent") in English, the *khānaqāh* is a room or an establishment where Šūfīs assemble around a spiritual master to perform rituals (often by night or in darkness) and to share meals, to communicate with one another, and to follow spiritual teachings. Amongst the etyma advanced by lexicographers and Šūfīs themselves, the most credible is the Persian noun *khāna* (house) with the locative suffix *-qāh/qāh*. The term appeared in the fourth/tenth century in the works of authors such as the Šūfī 'Abd al-Raḥīm b. Musā Iṣṭakhrī (from Iṣṭakhr in the Shiraz region, d. before 303/915-6) and the famous geographer from Jerusalem al-Muqaddasī (d. c.380/991), who mentioned establishments located in Khūzistān (southeastern Iran), Khurāsān (northwestern Iran), and Transoxania (southern Central Asia) (Arjah; Chabbi; Meier, *Abū Sa'īd*, 304-5). Scholars have proposed several hypotheses for the mediaeval origins of *khānaqāhs* and developed periodisations to shed light on the evolution of the institution up to the modern period (Böwering and Melvin-Koushki; Chabbi; Kiyānī; Uludağ; Yusupova).

## 1. THE ORIGINS OF KHĀNAQĀHS

It is difficult, if not impossible, to reconstruct the emergence of lodges in the history of Islamic mysticism. As a historiographical issue, however, it is of less relevance because, like all religious institutions, *khānaqāhs* were founded both in continuity and discontinuity with other, sometimes earlier, buildings—especially the *ribāṭ* (lit., fort, lodge in the religious sense) but also the *duwayra* (little house) and the *ṣawma'a* (hermitage)—in order to adapt to new contexts and respond to practical as well as theoretical problems. In the early evolution of the institution, there