

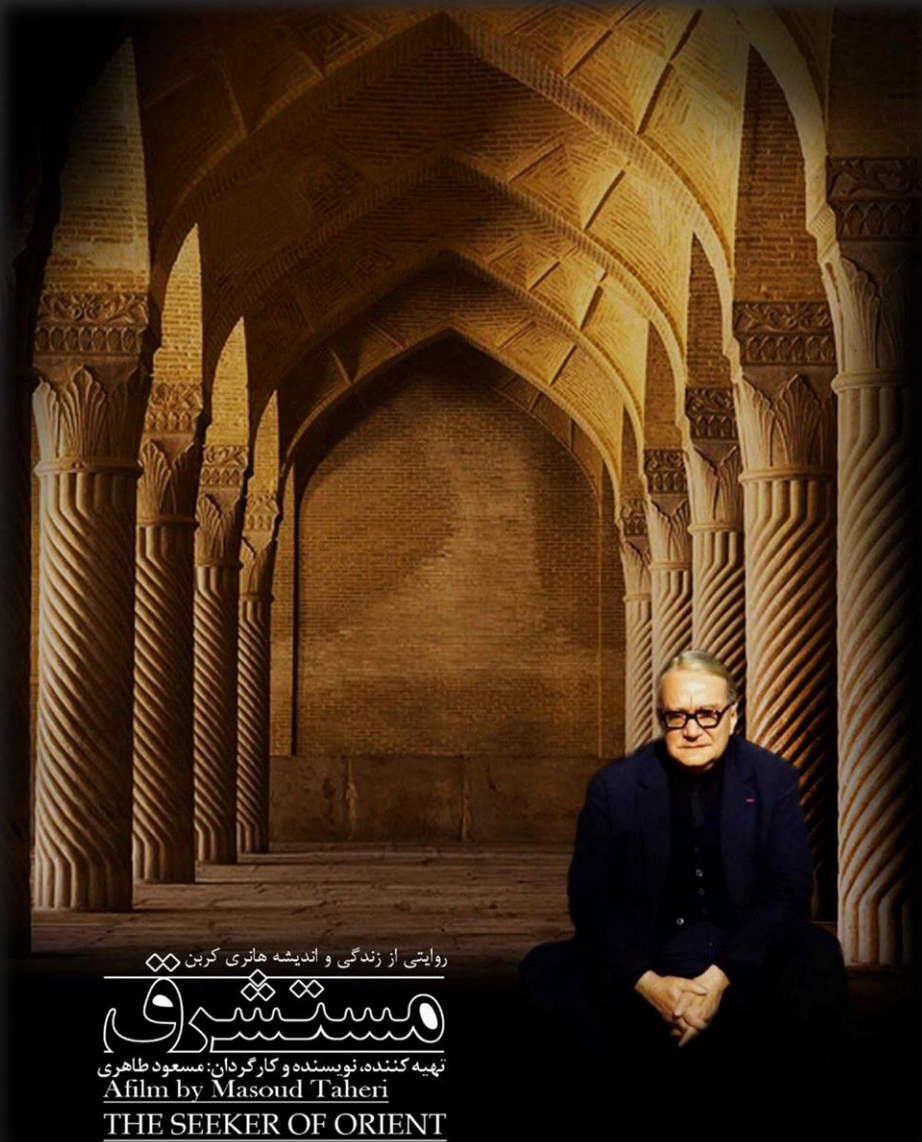
Documentary
film

Mustashriq (The Seeker of Orient) A Documentary Film about Henry Corbin

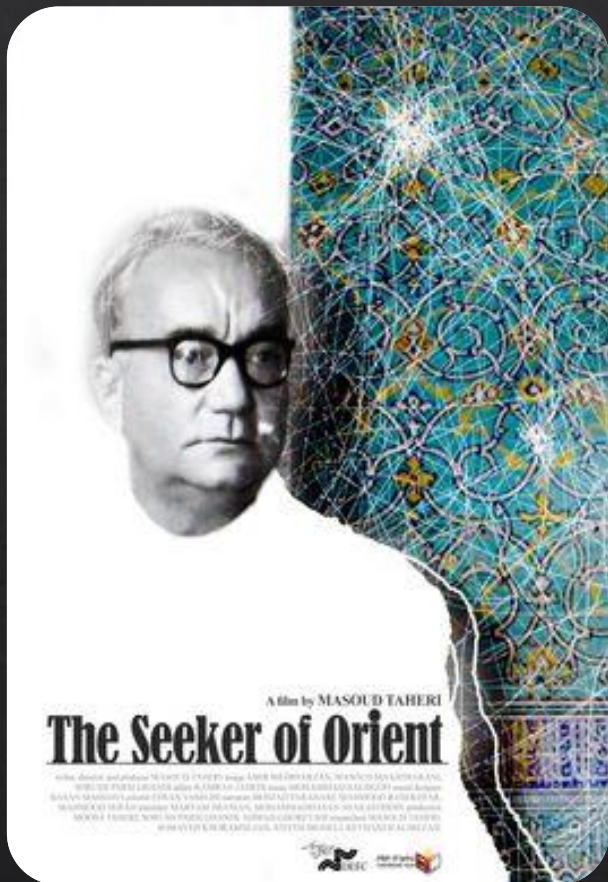
A film by: Masoud Taheri

“Is Islamic religion limited to its legalistic and juridical interpretation, to the religion of the law, to the exoteric aspect (zahir)? If the answer is in the affirmative, it is pointless even to speak of philosophy.”

Henry Corbin. History of Islamic Philosophy, trans. Liadain Sherrard. London: Kegan Paul International, 1993., P.25.



روایتی از زندگی و اندیشه هاتری کرین
مستشرق
تهیه کننده، نویسنده و کارگردان: مسعود طاهری
A film by Masoud Taheri
THE SEEKER OF ORIENT



The film “Mustashriq” was screened on February 7, 2018, at “Eyvān-e Shams” Hall in Tehran, and was attended by the then-French Ambassador, Philippe Thiebaud. The following day, a film critique session was held at the National Library of Iran, attended by several intellectuals, scholars, and critics. Originally, the plan was to screen this film at Sorbonne University and various research institutes and universities worldwide. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all these plans were canceled. In the meantime, the film was broadcast three times on Iran's Channel 4, the state-owned broadcasting channel. Additionally, various blogs and websites, including BBC Persian, featured introductions and critiques of the film. Since the end of the pandemic, screenings of the film have taken place at various universities.

Interview: Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, Christian Jambet, Pierre Lory, Daniel Proulx, Yann Richard, Jean-Claude Carrière, Nahal Tajadod, Seyyed Hosein Nasr, Darush Shayegan, Karim Mojtahedi, Bahman Zakipour, etc.

Genre	Theme	Language	Subtitle	Time	Fee (tax included)	Code
Documentary	Philosophy History Thought	Audio: Persian, French	English	110 Min	¥ 3,800 \$ 25.00	SHPF003

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The word “Mustashriq” is currently used in Arabic and Persian to mean “Orientalist.” According to common understanding, an “Orientalist” is someone who studies the culture, language, philosophy, art,

and religion of non-Western regions, specifically Asia and the Middle East. Furthermore, many studies related to the Orient have been linked directly or indirectly to the political, propaganda, and military interests of Western countries. As a result, Orientalists are generally not viewed positively. This perception has strengthened, particularly since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism*.

However, the legacy of Orientalism and Orientalists does not necessarily have negative aspects, as many of their studies have made significant contributions to the understanding of other cultures and civilizations.

The word “Mustashriq” originally had a philosophical and mystical meaning in classical Arabic and Persian, signifying a “seeker of the spiritual East.” The term “spiritual East” refers to the deep layers of human

consciousness and the innermost state or place where one can observe their own truth. It indicates a state or place that individuals can access through mystical experiences and intuition. In the tradition of Islamic mysticism, a “Mustashriq” is someone who explores the inner realms of their own consciousness, seeking to discover the “spiritual East” or the “true self.”

Henry Corbin was a European (French) Orientalist in the modern sense, initially studying in Turkey and later living in Iran for many years, where he had a significant influence on contemporary Iranian thought. However, simultaneously, he embodied the classical meaning of a “Mustashriq” as a “seeker of the spiritual East.” Corbin's strong mystical inclination and his philosophical critique of modernity and nihilism make him more than just an Orientalist; he can be considered a philosopher who found the path to the “spiritual East” and sought to transcend nihilism.

The film “Mustashriq,” directed by Iranian filmmaker Masoud Taheri, tells the story of Henry Corbin's life and thoughts. Through historical events and various expert testimonies, the film portrays Corbin's journey as an Orientalist who went to Iran, began his quest for the “spiritual East,” and ultimately completed it.



Henry Corbin 1903-78

Henry Corbin was renowned for his work in phenomenology, comparative philosophy, and the study of Iranian-Islamic thought. While he is often categorized as an Islamic scholar and Orientalist due to his historical research, his primary focus was on comparative philosophy. In this field, he delved into the interpretative phenomenology of the revelation phenomena in Western and Islamic philosophy, aiming to overcome nihilism and secularism and contemplating the completion of human personality. His contributions in the areas of interpretation, phenomenology, and comparative philosophy have been reevaluated in France, Italy, Iran, Japan, and the United States.

Biography

Born in Paris, Corbin enrolled at Sorbonne University in 1922, where he studied the history of philosophy under the guidance of Étienne Gilson (1884-1978) and Émile Bréhier (1876-1952). After earning a degree in philosophy in 1925, he completed his higher studies at the École pratique des hautes études with a study on the 16th-century Spanish poet and theologian Luis de León

(d. 1591). He had already been studying Arabic and Sanskrit at the National School of Oriental Languages and obtained degrees in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. Guided by Louis Massignon (1883-1962), he received many insights into Islamic studies. During this time, he was entrusted with lithographs of Suhrawardī's *The Philosophy of Illumination*, which set the course for his future research. Using Gilson's method of textual analysis of unpublished classical Arabic and Persian manuscripts, he paved the way for new horizons.

In 1930, Corbin went to Germany for his doctoral studies in theology under Karl Barth (1886-1968). In 1932, he translated parts of Barth's *Romans* into French. During a visit to Freiburg in 1934, he met Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) for the first time, and during his stay in Berlin in 1935-36, he prepared translations of Heidegger's works. In 1937, he translated Heidegger's *What Is Metaphysics?* and in 1938, parts of *Being and Time*. These translations, the first in French, had an impact on thinkers like Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980). From 1937, Corbin taught Lutheran theology and hermeneutics at the École pratique (1892-1964) des hautes études, later succeeding Massignon. By 1939, he had published two books on Suhrawardī, and during his service in Istanbul and

Tehran until 1945, he conducted comprehensive research and published critical editions of Suhrawardī's works. He continued to shuttle between Paris and Tehran, teaching at Tehran University and the Iranian Royal Academy of Philosophy from 1955 to 1973, where he interacted with Iranian intellectuals and Shia scholars, including Muḥammad Hussein Tabātabāi (1904-1981).

From 1949 to 1978, he participated in the Eranos Conferences and served as an advisory committee member from 1962. Throughout his life, he conducted research on Persian religious thought, previously ignored Shia philosophers and critical editions of manuscripts, and aimed to develop comparative philosophy based on this foundation.

Philosophy

Henry Corbin's seminal work, *The History of Islamic Philosophy*, highlights the enduring and creative evolution of Islamic philosophy in Persia, a tradition often thought to have waned after the 12th century due to the dominance of Scholastic philosophy in Western philosophy. It portrays how ancient

Iranian Philosophy seeped into Shia Islam. Corbin critically examines the philosophical trajectory from Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna, 980-1037) to Suhrawardī, acknowledging the blend of Ibn Arabī's (1165-1240) mysticism with Shia theology. This fusion sparked a renaissance in the Isfahan school of philosophy, a lineage that persists into modern times. The in-depth study of this school and its associated thinkers is deemed Corbin's most significant contribution to the study of thought and Islamic studies. His innovative approach in bridging the ideas of Suhrawardī with Western philosophical challenges, particularly those up to Heidegger, marks him as a notably original thinker in the field.



Corbin, diverging from Martin Heidegger's interpretation of existence, introduced a unique perspective into philosophical discourse. He focused on the “non-manifest existence” found in Islamic mysticism and the symbolic interpretations of Ṣadr ad-Dīn Shīrāzī (1571-1635), a leading figure of the Isfahan school, whose teachings have been revered as classical philosophy in Iran up to the present day. In his work *The Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabī*, Corbin reevaluated the concept of imagination. Traditionally viewed negatively in

Western philosophy post-Descartes (1596-1650), he redefined it as a creative faculty. This redefinition elevated religious experiences to the level of physical sensations, positioning imagination as a bridge between empirical sensation and conceptual thought, thereby facilitating the creation of images. Corbin coined this realm the “mundus imaginalis” (Imaginal World) and grounded it in angelology. This concept has gained acceptance in fields such as phenomenology and archetypal psychology.

Suhrawardī's conception of the “Imaginal World,” which he terms the angelic realm or the “Orient,” is central to Corbin's studies. This realm symbolizes a spiritual dimension, largely forgotten in the modern era, where divine manifestations occur directly and intuitively to humans in forms such as “light” or “angels”, offering a profound religious experience. Metaphysically, it's positioned between the realm of separate intelligences and the material world, functioning as a symbolic and creative space that transcends conventional physical and conceptual categories.

Corbin's extensive research into Iranian and Islamic philosophy reveals how the “Orient” has historically been seen as a level where light is synonymous with

knowledge. He drew parallels between this concept and ancient Persian, Greek, negative theology, and Western mystical thought, thus introducing this creative notion of the Imaginal into contemporary philosophical discourse. However, equating this “Orient” directly with ancient Persian or “Oriental Philosophy” presents challenges. Corbin's overarching objective was to rejuvenate the Imaginal World as a means to counteract nihilism and secularism. He envisioned comparative philosophy as a crucial tool in this endeavor, bearing the responsibility to avert these philosophical challenges and provide practical solutions.

This summary underscores Corbin's significant contribution to the understanding of Islamic philosophy, particularly its evolution in Persia, and highlights his unique approach to weaving these Eastern philosophies into the fabric of Western thought.

Notable works

1. *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*. Paris: Gallimard, 1964.
2. *L'Imagination créatrice dans le soufisme d'Ibn'Arabī*, Paris:Flammarion, 1977.
3. *Philosophie iranienne et philosophie compare*. Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 1979.
4. *L'Alchimie comme art hiératique*. Paris: L'Herne, 1986.



Masoud Taheri

An Iranian filmmaker, screenwriter, researcher, and producer.

Born in 1980 and currently residing in Tehran. He obtained his master's degree from Shahid Beheshti University in Tehran and began his career in the film industry in 1996. He has primarily focused on creating works centered around philosophy and mysticism.

Major movie works

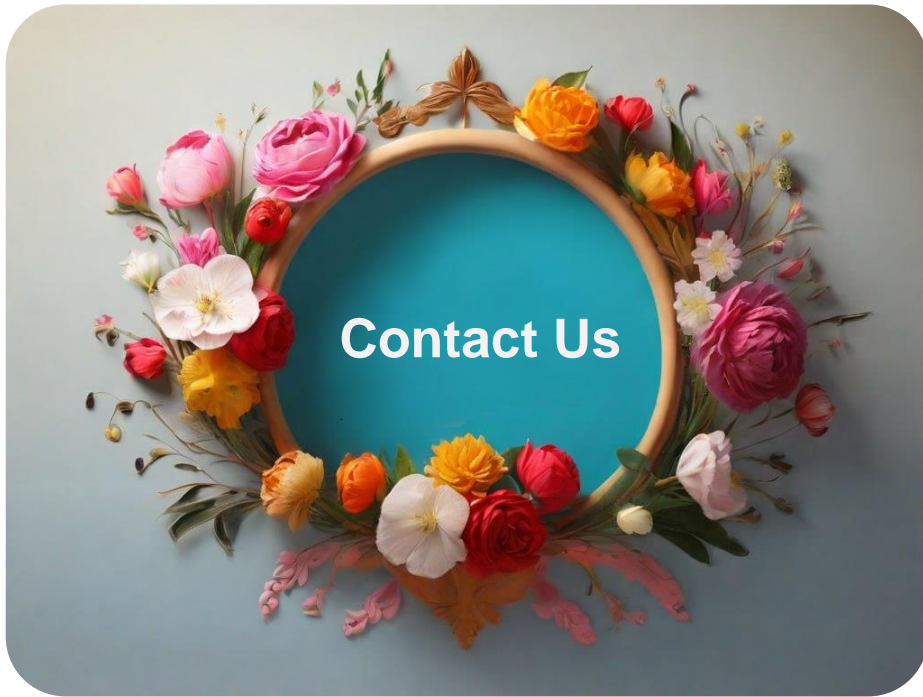
1. *Hissa-yi Raḥmat*. Feature film, 2011.
2. *Sharqī: About Toshihiko Izutsu, Japanese philosopher*. Feature film documentary, 2018.
3. *Mustashriq: About Henry Corbin, French philosopher*. Feature film documentary, 2019.
4. *Al-Kāfī: About Muḥammād ibn Ya‘qūb Kulaynī, Shī‘a ḥadīth collector the 10th century*. Feature film documentary, 2023.

Major TV programs

1. *Japanese Loved by Islam: The Giant of Knowledge, Toshihiko Izutsu*. NHK BS1 Channel, Local Filming Cooperation, 2019.
2. *The World is Full of Desired Things: The Beloved Persia, The Origin of Beauty*, NHK 1, Local Filming Cooperation, 2020.
3. *Tokoro de Nanjakorya!?! Continuous Shocking Videos from Around the World & Revealing the Secrets of Hit Products*, TV Tokyo, Local Filming Cooperation, 2022

publication

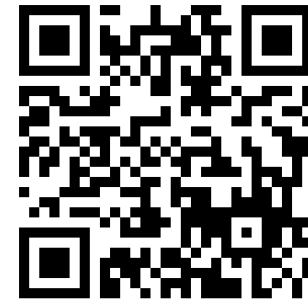
A‘llāma: Life and Works of Shamsu‘d-Din Muḥammād Amulī, Tehran: Nashr-i Nāmak, 1401s/2022.



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