



*Routledge Sufi Series*

# **STATE AND SUFISM IN IRAQ**

**BUILDING A “MODERATE ISLAM” UNDER  
SADDAM HUSAYN**

David Jordan



# State and Sufism in Iraq

*State and Sufism in Iraq* is the first comprehensive study of the Iraqi Ba‘th regime’s (r. 1968–2003) entanglement with Sufis and of Sunnī Sufi Islam in Iraq from the late Ottoman period until 2003 and beyond.

For far too long, the secular and authoritarian Ba‘th regime has been reduced to the dictator Ṣaddām Ḥusayn and portrayed as antireligious. Its growing political employment of Islam during the 1990s, in turn, has been interpreted either as an abstract Ba‘thist-nationalist Islam or as an ideological U-turn from secularism to a form of Islamism that ultimately contributed to the spread of Islamist terrorism after 2003. Broadening the narrow focus on Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, this book analyses other leading regime figures, their close entanglement with Sufis, and Ba‘th religious politics of a state-sponsored revival of Sufi Islam and Iraq’s broad and distinct Sufi culture. It is the story of a secular regime’s search for “moderate Islam” in order to overcome the challenges of radical Islamism and sectarianism in Iraq.

The book’s two-pronged interdisciplinary approach that deals equally with politics and Sufi Islam in Iraq makes it a valuable contribution to scholars and students in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, Religious Anthropology and Sociology, Political Science, and International Relations.

**David Jordan** (PhD 2019 Hamburg) is Research Associate for Islamic Studies at Bochum University. His research focusses on Sufism and the entanglement of religion and politics in the early modern and modern history of the Middle East. His publications include: “*Jaysh rijāl al-ṭarīqa al-naqshbandīya*: The Sufi Resistance of the Former Ba‘th Party in Iraq” (2020).