

A number of Sufi brotherhoods were established during the late 1960s one Kurdish sect had members in nine Middle Eastern countries. One of the brotherhoods, which came into being in the thirteenth century, was that of the whirling dervishes (from the Iranian word meaning "poor"), mendicant ecstasies known for their gyrating dances performed while in a trance, a condition heightened by the gyrations. Dervishes and other Sufi orders maintain loose organizations and hold private meetings at which Iraman Jews form one of the oldest Jewish communities in the world, and through over 1,000 years of living among the carried on.

Iranians, have become physically and spiritually very close to the Modern-day Sufis are not all beggars or poor. Many important public figures belong to one of the brotherhoods. They tend to live a conservative, closed religious life. They are fully protected by the sober, modest lives with a more than average regard for the precepts of Islam.

In the twentieth century the Jewish population has achieved The Bahai movement had its origin in the eighteenth-century importance in the commercial life of the major cities, particularly heretical beliefs of the followers of Shaykh Ahmed Ahsai, who and have entered the professions, most notably pharmacy, taught that the hidden imam was a creative force with which contact could be made through a human intermediary, the Bab and technical schools and are the only ethnic group that is (Door). In 1840 Mirza Ali Muhammad of Shiraz proclaimed himself considered 100 percent literate. The Jewish shrine to Esther and

self to be the Bab and gained the following of many tribal leaders. Mordecai
 is at Ramadan; the tomb of Daniel is supposed to be
 The Babi movement grew rapidly and assumed the character of a located
 near Ahvaz.
 militant new faith at considerable variance with Shiism. The
 Native Christians are limited almost entirely to the Semitic
 Babis interpreted the Koran as largely allegorical and represented
 Assyrians, numbering about 25,000, who live around Lake
 the resurrection as a manifestation of divine spirit. Claiming to Rezaieyh
 an? m. Tehran, and to the Armenians, the oldest and
 be Muslim nevertheless, they taught that all religions have ele- largest
 ethnic minority, totaling over 190,000, living mainly in
 ments of truth, peace, brotherhood, and tolerance. The heretics Tehran
 and Isfahan. Most Assyrians belong to the Assyrian
 were severely persecuted by the Shiite leaders, and many were put Church of
 the East, formerly and mistakenly called the Nestorian
 to death, including Mirza Ali Muhammad. Churc_h,
 but as a result of the Western missionary work of the
 A number of the Babis escaped, however, and followed Hussein :wentieth
 century, four distinct denominations also exist, includ-
 Ali Baha Ollah, a disciple of Mirza Ali Muhammad, who declared ng Roman
 Catholic and Protestant groups. Most Armenians
 himself the expected manifestation of the divine spirit, the ~elon~ to
 ~he Gregorian Church under the Catholicos of Cicile
 Messiah of all religions, and the promulgator of a new era. The }. Bel:ut
 m Lebanon. This has led to a political split in the
 followers of Baha Ollah, known as the Bahais, were pacifists (un- thrmeman
 c~mmunity as many Armenians continue to recognize
 like the Babis) and preached respect for the law. They advocated i Se
 .leadership of the Catholicos of Echmiadzim at Yerevan in
 universal brotherhood of man and legal equality between men and á; ovlet
 Armenia, who claims to represent the entire community.
 women. The Bahai movement has spread throughout the world;~.