

The Many Wines  
by Rumi  
translated by Coleman Barks



### Historical and cultural context

Jalal ad-Din Rumi (aka Rumi) was a 13th-century Sufi poet and mystic. Rumi was also a professor, husband and father. Sufism is a mystical branch of Islam, a religion which emerged in Arabia in the 7th Century at a time when excessive wealth from the spice trade, overuse of alcohol, and other behaviours were affecting family relationships and tribal customs. The Qur'an (the holy book for Islam) says of wine and gambling, "In them is great sin, and some profit, for men; but the sin is greater than the profit." Many Islamic societies went on to adopt formal rules against alcohol use. But like all major religions, there has always been great variation in beliefs and behaviours among followers of Islam.