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### Editorial Appraisals:

Some qualified reviewers offer their own brief evaluation of the book. Otherwise, most of our content represents the authors'-editors' own words as a preview to their approach to the subject, their style and point-of-view. <>

## **NARRATING THE PILGRIMAGE TO MECCA: HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNTS** edited by Marjo Buitelaar. Richard van Leeuwen [Leiden Studies in Islam and Society, Brill, ISBN 9789004513167] Open Access

**NARRATING THE PILGRIMAGE TO MECCA** discusses a wide variety of historical and contemporary personal accounts of the pilgrimage to Mecca, most of which presented in English for the first time. The book addresses how being situated in a specific cultural context and moment in history informs the meanings attributed to the pilgrimage experience. The various contributions reflect on how, in their stories, pilgrims draw on multiple cultural discourses and practices that shape their daily lifeworlds to convey the ways in which the pilgrimage to Mecca speaks to their senses and moves them emotionally. Together, the written memoirs and oral accounts discussed in the book offer unique insights in Islam's rich and evolving tradition of hajj and umra storytelling.

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## Reading Pilgrimage Accounts. A Preview

I made my Umra 7 years ago and to this day the memories send shivers down my spine. It was magical; more magical than Disneyland!! Words alone can’t explain the uplifting and exhilarating feeling rippling through myself! My favourite part was when we set foot inside the Haram [sacred Meccan space, mb] and my siblings and I were going to lay eyes on the Ka<sup>^</sup>ba [the cuboid building in the courtyard of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, mb] for the first time. We kept our eyes on the ground and only when we reached the courtyard did we look up. Wow. Gobsmecked. Amazing. I could only hear the birds singing and the general hum of people praying; I’d zoned out and no word in the entire dictionary will come close to describing how I felt. Pure, pure serenity ^ The overall experience is very humbling. As I’m writing this, I’m smiling.

This is how a British Muslim summarized her experience of the *ʿumra*, the voluntary pilgrimage to Mecca. She did so on a website where pilgrims were invited to share their experiences for the exhibition ‘Hajj: Journey to the heart of Islam’ at the British Museum in 2012. The quote is a particularly rich example that introduces the central theme of this book, which is how pilgrims to Mecca narrativize the pilgrimage—in other words, how they present their pilgrimage experiences in the form of a narrative.<sup>2</sup> Firstly, the comparison of Mecca with Disneyland in the quote is intriguing. It touches on the debate about the nature and scope of today’s commodification of the hajj. Some Muslims might consider it sacrilege to openly compare the holy city of Mecca to a Western commercial theme park. Others might say that commercialization—or ‘McDonaldization’, as the globalization of western commercial enterprises is often referred to (cf. Ritzer 1993)—is precisely what is jeopardizing the religious atmosphere in Mecca today, and is an issue that should be addressed. The Moroccan anthropologist Abdellah Hammoudi (2006) and Indian-American journalist Asra Nomani (2006), for example, are highly critical in their hajj memoirs of the commercialization and consumerism that they observed in Mecca. However, several participants in my own research, particularly younger pilgrims, said that they had been happy to discover McDonald’s and Kentucky Fried Chicken in Mecca. They felt that getting a taste of home while not having to worry whether the meat was halal and of good quality meant having the best of both worlds. It confirmed to them that one can be Muslim and modern at the same time. Indeed, the modernization projects implemented by the Saudi government to attract and accommodate an ever-increasing number of pilgrims and—equally importantly—to streamline pilgrims’ movements in accordance with a strict Wahhābī interpretation of Islam is a hotly debated issue and a recurring theme in the accounts of contemporary pilgrims (cf. Larsson and Sorgenfrei 2021, 14–15; McLoughlin 2015, 55). These debates shed light on the ways in which globalization, mobility, and feelings of home and belonging are intertwined and reproduced in complex ways in both pilgrims’ everyday activities and religious engagement.

The description of the journey to Mecca as ‘uplifting’ suggests that the woman quoted did not intend the analogy with Disneyland as a criticism of Saudi’s hajj management. Unfortunately, she does not elaborate on what triggered this comparison for her. An

obvious parallel between Mecca and Disneyland is that stories that visitors have grown up with come to life in both places; one can literally come into contact with the characters of these stories or, as in the case of Mecca, with places where they have visited or lived. In terms of religion, it is not difficult to understand why Mecca was the ‘more magical’ place of the two for the woman quoted. Certainly, visiting Disneyland has been convincingly analysed as a kind of pilgrimage (Knight 2014, 24–43), and like (other) pilgrimage sites, represents specific conceptions about living a ‘good life’ (cf. King 1981). The primary motivation of most visitors to Disneyland, however, pertains less to specific ideals than the wish to enjoy themselves. Mecca, on the other hand, is for Muslims the most powerful, sacred symbol of purity, perfection and an exemplary Muslim way of life. Fulfilling the religious obligation to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca is something that many Muslims yearn to do, a desire that is fuelled by the travel accounts of those who have made the journey. Like the British woman in the quote, most pilgrims describe stepping in the footsteps of key role models in Islamic historiography—such as the Prophets Muhammad, Ibrāhīm, Ismā‘īl and Ismā‘īl’s mother Hājar—as an intense, emotional and ‘uplifting’ experience.

Being ‘gobsmacked’ by experiences like seeing the Ka`ba with her own eyes is probably why this British pilgrim described her journey to Mecca as more magical than visiting Disneyland. Note how, in line with the informal term ‘gobsmacked’ to describe her feelings of being overwhelmed, she states that ‘not a word in the entire dictionary’ comes close to expressing how she felt. Nonetheless, when trying to convey her feelings, she describes her sensory experiences: memories of her first view of the Ka`ba, the hum of praying fellow pilgrims and the sound of birdsong still ‘send shivers’ down her spine, even though seven years have passed since she visited Mecca.

Interrelated with the theme of narrativization, a second key focus in this volume concerns how the performance of pilgrimage speaks to pilgrims through the senses and touches them emotionally. In this sense, the book ties in with a research project coordinated by Christian Lange, which studies how the senses have been conceptualized, and calibrated, in a variety of Muslim environments between 600 to 1900 ce.<sup>5</sup> In line with Lange’s approach, we understand the sensory perceptions of pilgrims as not only a physical but also a cultural act: how they experience and

understand sight, sound, smell, taste and touch during the pilgrimage journey varies for pilgrims from different historical, geographical, social and intellectual contexts.

At the same time, however, stating—as the British pilgrim above does—that words cannot convey the pilgrimage experience is a common trope in accounts of the journey to Mecca written in very different historical and cultural contexts. Elaborate descriptions of sensory experiences belong in similar fashion to the tradition of storytelling about the journey, regardless of whether it concerns the hajj, the obligatory pilgrimage that all able Muslims should perform at least once in their lives, or the <sup>^</sup>umra, the voluntary and less elaborate pilgrimage to Mecca that can be undertaken at any time of the year outside the hajj season. Variations on stories about starting to tremble, feeling one’s scalp tingle and one’s eyes fill with tears when sighting the Ka<sup>^</sup>ba feature widely in both the historical and contemporary accounts of the pilgrimage to Mecca that are discussed in the following chapters.

Expressing the extraordinary experience of the journey to Mecca by comparing it to a visit to Disneyland is—as yet—rather unique and points to how the British woman’s pilgrimage experience is embedded in her wider daily lifeworld. It would not surprise me, however, to learn that other pilgrims who have visited Disneyland draw similar parallels. In variation to comparing Mecca to Disneyland, two Dutch pilgrims who shared their pilgrimage stories with me referred to De Efteling, a Dutch theme park where one can physically enter the world of well-known fairy tales like Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty. By using informal expressions like being ‘gobsmacked’ and ‘zoned out’, the woman quoted brings Mecca and Disneyland into the same lexical landscape, even though she gives priority to Mecca. The use of modern vocabulary illustrates that the narrator’s everyday life is simultaneously informed by different cultural discourses. Although she does not state her age, the words she uses and the fact that she went to Mecca in the company of siblings suggest that she may still be young. It is not unlikely that her travelling with siblings may also relate to her gender. Whereas young male Muslims often go on <sup>^</sup>umra with male friends, unmarried women of the same age group generally perform the voluntary pilgrimage in the company of their father or a male sibling (cf. Saghi 2010). This is because Saudi pilgrimage regulations stipulate that female pilgrims under the age of 45 need to be accompanied by a ma<sup>^</sup>ram, a male

guardian, either in the person of their husband, or a male blood relative with whom marriage is prohibited (cf. Thimm 2021). Furthermore, the quoted woman has apparently visited both Disneyland and Mecca, which points to a habit of travelling that bespeaks a consumerist lifestyle. This is confirmed by the fact that she performed the voluntary <sup>^</sup>umra rather than the mandatory hajj, which also suggests that she expected to have sufficient financial means to return to Mecca in the future to fulfil the religious obligation of hajj performance. The various factors contributing to the opportunities available to this female British Muslim to visit Mecca illustrate another analytical theme that runs through the various chapters of this volume: how age, gender, class, ethnicity and cultural embeddedness intersect to inform pilgrims' practices and experiences against the background of their everyday lives.

The woman's word choice and her comparison of Mecca and Disneyland also point to the importance of considering the specific audiences that are addressed in pilgrimage accounts. When uploading her narrative on the British Museum website during the 2012 hajj exhibition, the woman was apparently motivated to share her experiences with an anonymous and diverse general public. Except for mentioning the Ka<sup>^</sup>ba and the <sup>^</sup>aram, as the sacred area of Mecca's Grand Mosque is called, she avoids using words that have a specifically religious connotation. By expressing herself in mostly informal language instead, she casts her story in terms that both Muslim and non-Muslim visitors of the British Museum's website are familiar with. Comparing Mecca to Disneyland may have served a similar purpose of speaking to a wider audience. She takes as a point of departure a shared cultural practice, such as a visit to Disneyland, to convey to non-Muslims some of the meanings that a specifically Islamic practice has for her, thus claiming sameness and specificity at the same time.

These analytical comments on the opening quote give a foretaste of the issues addressed in this volume. The book sketches a detailed and diverse picture of how, in their stories, pilgrims draw on multiple cultural discourses and practices that shape their daily lifeworlds. Each chapter sheds light on the ways that being situated in a specific cultural context and moment in history informs the meanings that pilgrims attribute to their pilgrimage experiences. All chapters address the narrativization of the pilgrimage to Mecca as what the anthropologist Birgit Meyer has called a 'sensational



form', that is, a ritual which speaks to the senses and emotionally moves people (Meyer 2016; 2012; 2011). Some, particularly the chapters that discuss historical pilgrimage accounts, do so by focusing more on how the storied experiences relate to the specific historical and cultural context of narrators and their intended audiences, while others place greater emphasis on scrutinizing the sensual and emotional trajectory of the pilgrimage.

The book contains both single-authored and jointly written chapters by the five members of the research project 'Modern Articulations of the Pilgrimage to Mecca' that will be introduced in the next section. It also presents chapters written by participants of the 'Narrating the hajj' conference, which was organized at the University of Groningen in December 2019 to conclude the research phase of data production. These additional contributions have allowed us to expand on the historical and cultural contexts under scrutiny, and to include discussions of travelogues and stories in languages other than the Arabic or Dutch accounts that were studied in the research project.

The historical travelogues discussed in the book are all written by hajj pilgrims who travelled mainly over land and sea. For their own safety, most pilgrims from outside the Arabian Peninsula would join one of the annual hajj caravans for at least part of their journey until the 1920s. It is only with the introduction of air travel that the voluntary 'umra pilgrimage has gained popularity among Muslims from outside the Arabian Peninsula. Pilgrims who can afford to make multiple journeys to Mecca may opt for the voluntary pilgrimage to gain a foretaste of the more important hajj variant, while others go on 'umra to relive their hajj experience in a quieter season. The voluntary pilgrimage is also an attractive alternative for Muslims who are worried that the quota system may prohibit them from performing the hajj before they die, or who cannot afford a much more expensive hajj package tour. While we do consider how pilgrims' different motives for performing the mandatory or voluntary pilgrimage are reflected in their stories about their pilgrimage experiences, we do not systematically distinguish between hajj and 'umra accounts in the book. One reason for this is that while the two forms differ in that only the hajj performance counts as fulfilling one's religious duty, conducting the rites of the 'umra is also included in the hajj ritual, meaning that the

experiences of hajj and 'umra pilgrims overlap to some extent. For most hajj and 'umra pilgrims, seeing the Ka`ba with their own eyes and visiting the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad in Medina are the most emotional episodes of their journey and therefore predominate in their stories. 'Standing' at Mount `Arafa is often, but not always, an additional highlight in the accounts of hajj pilgrims. The second reason why the distinction between hajj and 'umra accounts is not systematically made in the book is that many contemporary pilgrims whose stories are analysed have made multiple pilgrimages, and they discuss both the hajj and the ^umra in their stories.

The book is divided into two parts. The first discusses historical textual accounts and the second consists of social scientific discussions of oral pilgrimage stories collected through ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with contemporary pilgrims. While the authors of the historical chapters take readers on the pilgrimage journey of one or several individual pilgrims whose written hajj accounts they discuss, the chapters on the pilgrimage experiences of contemporary pilgrims explore how specific dimensions of narrating the hajj in today's world feature in a larger body of interviews and informal conversations. The two parts are bridged by a chapter that combines the two approaches by focusing on the oral pilgrimage accounts of two young adult Dutch pilgrims who participated in the research project 'Modern articulations of pilgrimage to Mecca'. The next section presents the research project on which this volume is based. Subsequent sections will reflect on the narrativization of the pilgrimage to Mecca as a sensational form and discuss how this central theme is highlighted in the specific case studies discussed in this volume.

### The Hajj as a Sensational Form

Like the British pilgrim in the opening quote, nearly all pilgrims report that words cannot (properly) convey the 'wow' that they experienced. When trying to articulate their feelings of awe, narrators of pilgrimage accounts tend to describe sensory experiences. In her chapter, Al-Ajarma documents the sensual lexicon of her interlocutors when they try to convey their ineffable experiences in terms of bodily responses. Ethnographic fieldwork enabled her to study the dialogical construction of hajj stories in a very direct way; she was witness to or a conversation partner in many oral exchanges between narrators of hajj stories and their audiences. Her observations

reveal the performative quality of such exchanges: when narrators described how tears ran down their cheeks as they approached the Ka`ba, tears would flow again; when describing a paralyzing tingling in her legs as she stood in front of the Ka`ba, a female narrator first pinched her own leg and then that of the woman sitting next to her; when describing how her heart was burning with a desire to return to Mecca, another pilgrim beat her chest. Bodies convey feeling by immediate connection, one that enables what David Morgan (2010, 59) would call 'emotional contagion'. In other words, re-enacting how the emotional dimensions of their journey were mediated through bodily sensations allowed the narrators whom Al-Ajarma observed to relive their feelings, as well as to draw in their audiences and participate in the experience.

The preponderance of trembling bodies, palpitating hearts, and, most of all, tears flowing down cheeks reported in virtually all hajj accounts shows how the body actively shapes, colours, tunes, and performs pilgrims' religious orientation. Indeed, performing pilgrimage is a sensory experience par excellence; the whole body participates in its expression and production (cf. Jansen 2012, 6; Coleman and Eade 2004). As Vida Bajc argues, by speaking directly to the body, pilgrimage is 'a medium through which narrative imaginaries and places visited are conjoined to generate particular emotional awareness and evoke intensification of experience of being in that place' (Bajc 2007, 398).

To understand what engenders such an intense experience of the sacred, it is particularly helpful to adopt Meyer's approach to religion as a 'sensational form' when studying the pilgrimage to Mecca. Meyer argues that the sensation of 'awe' or immediacy of the sacred that religious practitioners may experience is not a prior quality of a sacred place or time, but a product of mediation (Meyer 2011, 23). Religious feelings are not just there, they are evoked by 'sensational forms':

relatively fixed modes for invoking and organising access to the transcendental, offering structures of repetition to create and sustain links between believers in the context of particular religious regimes. These forms are transmitted and shared; they involve religious practitioners in particular practices of worship, and play a central role in modulating them as religious moral subjects and communities MEYER 2011,

Conceiving of the relationship between sensing subjects and their experiences of transcendency as mediated through sensational forms requires a focus on the material

and sensory dimensions of religious mediation—that is, a focus on the aesthetics through which our sensory experience of the world and our knowledge of it is organized and ‘tuned’ in a way that yields a specific habitus (Meyer 2012, 165–167).

The pilgrimage to Mecca is a particularly powerful sensational form with a strong presence in the daily lifeworld of Muslims, regardless of whether they have performed the pilgrimage themselves. First of all, Mecca is an important point of bodily orientation in Muslims’ lives; they are buried facing Mecca, and the *ḥaḍḥ*, the five daily prayers, are likewise conducted facing Mecca. In societies with a Muslim-majority population, even those who do not practise the *ḥaḍḥ* develop an awareness of their position in relation to Mecca as they go through their daily routines as a result of seeing Muslims pray, or being asked by someone who wishes to pray whether they happen to know the direction of Mecca. In Moroccan-Arabic, Mecca as a point of orientation has even become proverbial; a person who gets confused or disoriented might express this by stating: ‘*tlift al-qibla*’, literally: I got the direction of Mecca wrong.

Mecca is also present in everyday life in material form, for example in the shape of souvenirs that pilgrims take home (cf. Flakerud 2018, 47–50). Objects that are used in everyday devotional acts, like the prayer mats and prayer beads mentioned by the Turkish-Dutch pilgrim Enes in Buitelaar’s chapter, are favourite souvenirs that connect their users to Mecca, while dates and sacred water from the Zamzam Well literally allow a taste of the sacred and the incorporation of its *baraka* or blessings. Perfume oil, jewellery, headscarves and dresses are other popular souvenirs that mediate Mecca through close bodily contact. For aspiring pilgrims, these tangible objects provide an imagined link with the sacred destination and evoke a longing for it. For those who have been on pilgrimage, they serve as ‘touchstones of memory’ (Morgan and Pritchard 2005, 41), which contain traces of the power of the original experience, thus helping to re-evolve the sacred journey in the imagination (cf. Mesaritou 2012, 107).

As well as being mediated through souvenirs, Mecca is also conspicuously present in Muslim daily life in the form of images of the Ka’ba on wall tapestries, paintings, and photographs that many Muslims use to decorate their houses, shops and offices (cf. page 284 in this volume). Representations of the Ka’ba are often paired with those of

the Grand Mosque in Medina, where the Prophet Muhammad is buried. Together, these images remind Muslims of the highlights of the much-coveted journey to Mecca. Mecca also features widely in folktales and popular songs, as well as entering people's homes in televised form, for example in an episode of the popular mbc animated children's series *Taysh ^Ayāl*, where an entire family goes on ^umra. More importantly, a popular channel for ambient watching is *Makkah Live*, which broadcasts 24/7 from the Grand Mosques in Mecca and Medina.

As Seán McLoughlin (2009b, 288) has argued, Mecca's ubiquitous visual presence in people's daily lifeworlds at once demythologizes and re-mythologizes the hajj. Based on the findings of the hajj research project that this book builds on, I would argue that this is particularly the case for its representations on social media and in television broadcasts. Such 'live' images demythologize the pilgrimage to Mecca in the sense of leaving little to the imagination as to what the place actually looks like. At the same time, they re-mythologize the sacred city by making an enormous appeal to those who are routinely confronted with these images; its visual omnipresence in everyday life reinforces the idea that visiting Mecca is what Muslims should most desire, thus contributing to normative conceptions of Muslim subjectivity. The reconfirmation by returning pilgrims that the experience is 'beyond words' further enhances Mecca's magical qualities in the imagination.

The fascination with the image of the Ka`ba obviously relates to the building's central role in Islam's sacred history. Firstly, it represents God's house on earth. Secondly, shortly before he died, the Prophet Muhammad returned to Mecca in 632 c e, ten years after having left for Medina to escape persecution by its non-Muslim rulers, in order to perform his 'Farewell Pilgrimage' and restore the ritual to what Muslims consider its original Abrahamic form (cf. McMillan 2011, 19–20). The Prophet's triumphant return to Mecca marked the first step in Islam's worldwide expansion. Over time, the flow of pilgrims circumambulating the Ka`ba has come to symbolize the umma, the global Muslim community.

While the symbolic power of the Ka`ba in Muslim imagery largely explains why pilgrims are so often greatly moved when seeing the structure, I would argue that the

enormous emotional impact that most pilgrims report when first seeing the Ka`ba is amplified by finally setting their eyes on a hitherto unattainable object whose image they have been familiar with from early childhood. The real-life encounter establishes what Britta Knudsen and Anne Marit Waade call ‘performative authenticity’: the thrill that travellers may experience as they authenticate the existence of a well-known place on the basis of a pre-existing sensuous and emotional relatedness to it (Knudsen and Waade 2010, 12–13). In this respect, the awe that seeing the Ka`ba evokes in pilgrims does not differ from the effect that particularly famous tourist destinations are known to have on visitors. Indeed, travellers to such sites describe similar intense experiences of a ‘loss of self’, ‘exhilaration’, and ‘transcendence’ (cf. Whittaker 2012, 74–75).

Where seeing the Ka`ba with one’s own eyes differs from, say, taking in the landscape at the Victoria Falls, is that these sites owe their authentication effects to different aesthetic forms (cf. Van den Port and Meyer 2018, 20). Pilgrims to Mecca are predisposed to interpreting the awe they experience when sighting the Ka`ba as a religious feeling. The ubiquitous visual presence of the Ka`ba in their everyday lives as a marker of a global Muslim identity, the stories about the significance of the various sites that make up the hajj in Islam’s history, and the testimonies of pilgrims who preceded them, are all part of an Islamic aesthetics which maps the ‘emotional itinerary’ of the pilgrimage (Gade 2007, 38). In other words, pilgrims anticipate being moved to tears when they see the Ka`ba with their own eyes.

Indeed, pilgrims who do not live up to the expected emotions, for instance by not producing tears when seeing the Ka`ba, like Salma and Enes in the chapters by Al-Ajarma and Buitelaar respectively, tend to be surprised or disappointed, and some even worry that it might signal a lack of *ikhla`*, or sincere devotion.

This points to the moral weight that is attached to being moved to tears. More generally, stories about being moved to tears or about disappointment when tears do not materialize illustrate that the experience and display of emotions are culturally mediated; in different cultural contexts, some emotions are actively cultivated, while others are neglected or suppressed (cf. Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990, 11).

In Islam's emotional discourse, weeping is a praiseworthy emotion. It is mentioned in the Qur'an in verse 5: 83, for example, as the appropriate response to listening to God's word: 'when they listen to what has been sent down to the Messenger, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears because they recognize the Truth [in it]' (Abdel Haleem 2004). Also, the Prophet Muhammad is documented as having regularly wept, a practice that was emulated by a group of early Sufis who went by the name of 'the Weepers' (Gade 2007, 40). In this emotional discourse, weeping is not an expression of pain or personal suffering, but a sign of awareness of God and being overwhelmed by his greatness and one's love for him (Mahmood 2005, 130–131). As Anna Gade warns us, we should be cautious about tracing the emotions of 'ordinary' Muslims back to emotion theory in authoritative textual sources (Gade 2007, 42). The recurrent references to weeping in the pilgrimage accounts discussed in this volume demonstrate, however, that the conception of weeping as a highly valued ethical disposition has a long tradition in hajj storytelling.

Particularly interesting in terms of how narrators of hajj accounts narrate the emotional itinerary of the hajj is the chapter by Kateman, who maps how travelogues written in the early decades of the twentieth century reflect the great changes occurring at the time. Kateman found that the narrators of these accounts used the same conventional descriptions of sensory experiences as their predecessors, such as the heart skipping a beat and shedding copious tears, to describe how the rites and sacred sites affect them. She observed much more variation in their descriptions of emotional responses to new phenomena such as trains and steamships, quarantine measures imposed by European colonial powers and new rules of conduct introduced by the Saudi regime to impose its strict Wahhābī interpretation of Islam. Kateman's analysis thus demonstrates that additional emotional styles related to other cultural discourses were introduced in the hajj accounts alongside emotional styles that are anchored in the Islamic tradition.

Several contributors to this volume point out that the strong religious feelings that narrators of hajj accounts report do not necessarily express their actual feelings, but should be understood as conventional tropes that their readers expect them to describe. Indeed, like any kind of self-narrative, travel biographies should not be read

for factual information but for what the narrators wish to convey about the experiences they describe and the meanings they attribute to those experiences.

At the same time, discourses create real effects in people. Pilgrims are affected by the emotions that are communicated through hajj-related souvenirs, images, and stories. This comes to the fore particularly well, for example, in Hammoudi's observation that the hajj journey he was about to embark on out of academic interest turned into a personal quest as well: 'I had not foreseen the feelings that now I could no longer elude, for the more imminent and real my departure became, the more it seemed to authorize, even free up, certain words' (Hammoudi 2006, 5). Discursively mediated cultural understandings of feelings become part of pilgrims' habitus and inform their embodied experiences. Moreover, ritual performance can be deliberately applied as a 'bodily technique' to induce certain feelings (cf. Mahmood 2005). In fact, hajj storytelling probably owes much of its emotional vocabulary to the kind of Sufi treatises and personal accounts about the pilgrimage that Saghæe and Van Leeuwen discuss in this volume. The authors demonstrate that for Sufis, the salience of the physical journey to Mecca pertains first and foremost to its capacity to cultivate inner feelings that should bring the pilgrim closer to God. Like the British woman in the opening quote, many hajj tour guides tend to make use of this technique of inducing feelings through bodily acts: to increase the emotional impact on their clients of sighting the Ka<sup>^</sup>ba for the first time, they advise pilgrims to keep their eyes cast down until they are standing directly in front of it.<sup>34</sup>

This should obviously not be taken to mean that all pilgrims necessarily go through the same emotions. One reason for this is that the Islamic tradition is rich in emotional styles. While many pilgrims to Mecca hope to obtain blessings and be touched by the sacred in a direct, sensual way, those with more reformist inclinations may seek to strengthen their faith through detached contemplation (cf. Van Leeuwen 2015).<sup>35</sup> Still others, such as adherents to legalistic understandings of Islam, may be driven by an— at times even anguished— concern to carry out the rites correctly lest their performance be invalidated. Furthermore, as the contributions by Bachtin, Ecker and Janmohamed to this volume illustrate, Shi'i Muslims may not experience the same sense of belonging as Sunni pilgrims. For them, the hajj is connected to the martyrdom



of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, Imām Ḥusayn, at the hands of a Sunni Umayyad caliph who ruled Mecca at the time. They may therefore experience moments of intense grief or resentment (Fischer and Abedi 1990, 167). As Janmohamed's chapter illustrates, political tension, such as enmity between Saudi Arabia and the post-revolutionary Republic of Iran, may be reflected in hostile feelings between Sunni and Shi'i Muslims from other countries. Indeed, like the narrators of the historical pilgrimage accounts discussed by Bachtin and Ecker, contemporary Norwegian Shi'i pilgrims also report being afraid of Sunni harassment (Flaskerud 2018, 46).

The ways that pilgrims' sensibilities are shaped by class may also impact on their feelings. Both the historical and contemporary accounts discussed in this volume contain numerous examples of class-specific experiences. Nurgat, for example, mentions certain privileges that the pilgrims whose pilgrimage accounts he discusses enjoyed as members of the elite, such as entering the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad. The travel account of Farhād Mirzā discussed by Ecker similarly contains references to differential treatment, in his case being received by foreign state officials on his journey to Mecca. Other examples can be found in Kateman's chapter, where she describes how pilgrims' experiences in the quarantine camps were coloured by class, while in chapter eight Van Leeuwen refers to the poem of an 'Ibā'ī shaykh, who fiercely criticized the 'unhygienic behaviour' of pilgrims whom he classified as 'peasants'. Variation in emotional responses relating to the different sensibilities of pilgrims from lower-class rural backgrounds and those with middle-class lifestyles also emerges in the chapter by Buitelaar and Kadrouch-Outmany in relation to the sojourn of contemporary Dutch pilgrims in the Mina tent camp. The chapter by Buitelaar and Al-Ajarma discusses class differences in smartphone use between Moroccan and Dutch-Moroccan pilgrims.<sup>37</sup> More generally, being able to afford a five-star hotel room in the Mecca clock tower with a view of the Ka'ba and within the precinct of the sacred space of the Grand Mosque itself (cf. the photograph on page 340), creates a very different pilgrimage experience than having to sleep in the streets or in the Grand Mosque and beg for food.

Gender similarly informs pilgrims' experiences. Women and men may differ, for example, in their emotional response to the genderedness of the Islamic role models whose stories are re-enacted in the hajj rites. Also, while the basic rules for the hajj rites

are the same for all pilgrims, some details differ for male and female pilgrims. In all such instances, the rules for male pilgrims allow for more outward expression. Most noticeable is the difference in dress code for pilgrims once they enter *i^rām*, the state of consecration. The *i^rām* clothes for men consist of two, unstitched pieces of white cloth, while women can wear any clothing provided that they hide their body contours and leave the face and hands exposed. The expression of women's liminal status is thus given less emphasis than men's. Also, all pilgrims utter the devotional *talbiya* prayer once they have pronounced their intention to enter the *i^rām* state, and continue to repeat the invocation throughout the pilgrimage. Whereas men chant the *talbiya* out loud, women should murmur it softly to themselves. In a similar vein, for a specific part of the *sa^y*, the rite in which pilgrims walk back and forth seven times between the hillocks of al-Mafā and al-Marwa, men are advised to run, while women should continue at a walking pace.

them to Mecca in their thoughts. Such personal feelings may surface unexpectedly, for example, if a pilgrim is suddenly engulfed by grief when saying supplication prayers for a deceased parent who never had the opportunity to perform the pilgrimage themselves. Similarly, being surrounded exclusively by fellow Muslims may trigger emotions relating to ambivalent senses of belonging in European pilgrims with migrant backgrounds, as discussed in the chapter by Buitelaar and the one by Safar and Seurat. It may prompt them to reconfigure their attachments to the country of their family's origin, their country of residence, and to Mecca as a spiritual homeland. Conversely, the encounter with Muslims who are very different from themselves, and performing the pilgrimage in a different environment than their familiar lifeworld, may make pilgrims reflect on how they have been shaped by the cultural context in which they live their daily lives.

Besides making sense of emotions that surface unexpectedly, pilgrims—in addition to wanting to fulfil their religious obligation—may be motivated to go on *hajj* with the explicit purpose of working on their emotions. They may hope that the experience will help them come to terms with a divorce, for example, or not being able to conceive, their own mortality or the death of a relative or friend. Alternatively, visiting Mecca may relate to a felt need to 'fuel up a bit', to quote one of Caidi's research participants,

for example after suffering burnout, or, like Enes in Buitelaar's chapter, to turn the page and start the next phase of life with a clean slate.

### Concluding Reflections on Mecca as a Storied Place of Attachment

Without exception, the pilgrimage accounts discussed in this volume testify to the enormous significance of Mecca as a place of attachment for Muslims, which explains the tremendous increase of pilgrim numbers as the means of transportation have improved. At the same time, however, the much-coveted journey to Mecca remains beyond the reach of many. Therefore, besides its ubiquitous presence in the form of images of the Kaaba, Mecca features, above all, as a 'storied' place in the lives of most Muslims. By focusing on personal narrative accounts of the pilgrimage experience, this book enhances our understanding of how emotional attachment to Mecca is both represented and (re)generated in storytelling. Combining chapters that discuss written historical travelogues with contributions that analyse oral contemporary accounts, the book sheds light on commonalities and specificities, and on continuity and change in the rich and multi-voiced tradition of hajj storytelling that Van Leeuwen discusses more extensively in chapter one.

The approach of this book to investigate the pilgrimage to Mecca as a living tradition by adopting the perspective of narrativization entails an inquiry into two paradoxical issues. The first pertains to the endeavour to study both continuity and change in the tradition of hajj storytelling. The pilgrimage derives much of its power from the fact that it is located in the place where Islam originated. Therefore, pilgrims tend to seek and cherish experiences of continuity and authenticity first and foremost. This makes researching how narrators have accommodated the enormous changes that have occurred since the mid-nineteenth century in their pilgrimage accounts all the more interesting. For this reason, from the outset, the aim of the historical sub-project of the research project on modern articulations of the pilgrimage to Mecca was to investigate, among other things, representations of the advent of modern technology in travelogues from the latter half of the nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century. The chapters addressing pilgrimage accounts from this period provide ample examples of pilgrims 'variegated responses. Looking back, it is difficult to understand why the original research plan had a blind spot regarding the impact of a more recent

technological innovation on pilgrimage practices: the introduction of social media. The desirability of including social media as a topic of investigation became evident as soon as the empirical phase of the project started. As the chapters in this book that address the use of social media demonstrate, its affordance to create co-presence between pilgrims and those they left behind has deeply influenced the mediation of the pilgrimage experience. Indeed, one could safely argue that the smartphone has become part of the repertoire through which Mecca's sacredness is experienced.

A second paradoxical element in the project's focus on the narrative mediation of the pilgrimage concerns the recurring statement in nearly all travel accounts that words cannot convey the powerful impact of performing the pilgrimage. The claim that the pilgrimage experience is beyond representation expresses the view that sensing Mecca's sacred power is ideally an unmediated experience that requires physical presence. The purpose of the book's focus on narrativization is not to invalidate such views, but to understand how narrators and their audiences come to interpret the pilgrimage experience in terms of an unmediated encounter with the sacred.

The suggested lack of mediation is also reflected in the emphasis in pilgrimage accounts on the embodied emotions prompted by the physical encounter with the sacred place. Approaching the pilgrimage to Mecca from the perspective of narrativization elucidates how such 'emotions of encounter' are articulated at the interface between collectively shared storylines relating to an Islamic moral register and those connected to other grand schemes that inform pilgrims' everyday lives. Laila El-Sayed (2016, 3) speaks of 'emotions of encounter' to refer to the feelings triggered in travellers when meeting hitherto unknown people in unfamiliar lands. In my own use of the term here, it also encompasses feelings prompted by the experience of an encounter with the sacred. More specifically, I conceive of 'emotions of encounter' in terms of the feelings that result from the various ways in which different cultural discourses and moral registers conjoin in pilgrims' making sense of their encounters in Mecca. Such emotions of encounter encourage pilgrims to reflect on the connection between the meanings of the pilgrimage for them and significant events in their life. Various chapters in the book demonstrate how the narrators of pilgrimage accounts

add their own voices to existing storylines and, conversely, re-align their life stories to these storylines.

The analysis of pilgrims' narratives about the emotions of encounter in this book thus points to the salience of looking beyond the sacred sites themselves in order to trace the ways in which pilgrimage mediates between various realms of pilgrims' experiences. Indeed, the book's focus on narrative mediation of the pilgrimage as a sensational form sheds light on how pilgrims make sense of their experiences by navigating storylines from a multiplicity of emotional discourses and grand schemes that inform their lives. Both the contributions that analyse historical pilgrimage travelogues and those that discuss contemporary accounts document how vocabularies belonging to different cultural discourses acquire novel meanings as pilgrims translate and reiterate them in new settings. Moreover, the resulting picture indicates that moral registers pertaining to different ideals in pilgrim stories do not necessarily operate separately or cause fragmentation. Ideals about Muslim personhood, social mobility, and romantic love, for example, maybe mixed and merged in the specific moral lessons that pilgrims draw from their pilgrimage experiences.

The contributions to the volume thus demonstrate that the narrators of pilgrimage accounts are active agents who appropriate the cultural discourses available to them in order to interpret and represent the pilgrimage in their accounts in ways that help them to make sense of their place in the world and to shape their relationships with others. In this sense, the meaning-making in pilgrimage accounts resonates with Thomas Tweed's understanding of religions as 'confluences of organic-cultural flows' (Tweed 2006, 54). As Tweed argues, by designating where we are from, identifying whom we are with, and prescribing how we move across space and time, religion is about 'crossing and dwelling', about making homes and crossing boundaries (Tweed 2006, 74–79). The meaning of Mecca as a strong point of orientation and place of attachment that comes to the fore in nearly all chapters in this book demonstrate that pilgrimage—and its narrativization—can be a very apt vehicle for such crossings and dwellings. <>

## **ON SALAFISM: CONCEPTS AND CONTEXTS** by Azmi Bishara [Series: Stanford Studies in Middle Eastern and Islamic Societies and Cultures, Stanford University Press, 9781503630352]

**ON SALAFISM** offers a compelling new understanding of this phenomenon, both its development and contemporary manifestations. Salafism became associated with fundamentalism when the 9/11 Commission used it to explain the terror attacks and has since been connected with the violence of the so-called Islamic State. With this book, Azmi Bishara critically deconstructs claims of continuity between early Islam and modern militancy and makes a counterargument: Salafism is a wholly modern construct informed by specific sociopolitical contexts.

Bishara offers a sophisticated account of various movements—such as Wahabbism and Hanbalism—frequently collapsed into simplistic understandings of Salafism. He distinguishes reformist from regressive Salafism, and examines patterns of modernization in the development of contemporary Islamic political movements and associations. In deconstructing the assumptions of linear continuity between traditional and contemporary movements, Bishara details various divergences in both doctrine and context of modern Salafisms, plural. **ON SALAFISM** is a crucial read for those interested in Islamism, jihadism, and Middle East politics and history.

### Reviews

"On Salafism is a timely, erudite account of the genealogy of Salafism, covering a broad chronological and geographical scope. Azmi Bishara provides important correctives to recent scholarly approaches to Salafism, and forcefully demonstrates that modern articulations of Salafism are facets of ideological projects, not natural culminations of classical Islamic traditions." —Ahmad Dallal, American University in Cairo

"On Salafism covers a subject too often the source of deep misunderstanding. Drawing on comprehensive social science research, Azmi Bishara develops a fully documented history that stuns." —François Burgat, French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS)

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THE 2018 RELEASE OF THIS BOOK IN ARABIC TOOK PLACE IN A

rather roundabout fashion. During the same period, I published a book on the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and in the course of writing its introduction, I became concerned that I might create the impression that an entity like ISIL is a natural outcome of Salafism (which it is not). Consequently, I decided to develop what had begun as a mere introduction to a book on ISIL into a separate work on Salafism, the English translation of which is now in the reader's hands. In addition to making the book available to interested readers who do not speak Arabic, this English translation gave me the opportunity to revise the book and incorporate additional secondary literature.

As will become apparent in the next four chapters, this book problematizes the term Salafism (Salafiyya), whose current widespread use appears at first glance unproblematic. This problematization is not an end in itself, of course. Rather, it is intended to facilitate a better understanding of the phenomenon to which the term Salafism is meant to refer and, in so doing, to transform a widely used, but poorly defined, term into a conceptualization of a particular phenomenon, and then to explore its interactions with other phenomena.

Chapter I provides an overview of the many phenomena to which the term Salafism applies. I identify the similarities and differences among the various types of Salafis and describe the juristic traditions with which modern Salafis associate themselves. I distinguish between two types of Salafism; modern and premodern (like Wahhabism). The modern Salafism can be categorized in types of return (or appeal) to the Sa[af (righteous ancestors) and the sacred text and discussed in terms of how these appeals relate to the fundamental principles of Islam. Reformists advocate for the first type of return: bringing about renewal through ijtihad and the removal of impediments (such as misguided religious traditions) to Muslim societies' advancement and evolution within the context of modernity while still affirming these societies' identification with the Islamic civilizations. In fact, the "purification" of religion advocated by Islamic reformists (Islahiyyun) like Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897 CE), Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905 CE), and Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (1849-1902 CE) is comparable to that of religious and secular reformers who advocate returning to the pristine fundamentals as a "new" point of departure to progress. The second type of return is promoted by both puritan and jihadi Salafis who aim to reshape the modern and contemporary era of Muslim history by turning Islamic teaching into a regressive ideology of political movements, jihadi or otherwise, and by proselytizing puritan groups that claim not to involve themselves in politics.

Chapter I: What Is Salafism? aims to deconstruct the term Salafism, which is used in a careless, simplistic and reductionist way. Salafism, it argues, is a purely historical designation that refers to a variety of Sunni and Shia "salafisms," rather than a single phenomenon. The chapter also asserts that Orientalist studies of Islam are epistemologically constrained by stereotypes and a viewpoint that tends towards a simple dichotomy of East and West, often tinged with latent or overt racism. It further emphasizes that Islamic movements cannot be understood without examining the socio-cultural context in which they emerged. It further identifies the differences and commonalities among the various types of Salafis, and the difference between two types of "return," or appeal, to the Salaf: that of the Reformists, and that of puritan and Jihadi Salafis. The chapter also examines the concept of "fundamentalism," which is often used as synonymous with Salafism.

While chapter I seeks to clear up the confusion that often surrounds these two "returns," it also justifies the initial application of the term Salafi to both types of returns despite the fact that they differ substantially with respect to aim, method, and their understanding of Islamic fundamentals and the Salaf.

As such, the need to differentiate between these returns is a sine qua non if we want to understand these different phenomena, and the concept of Salafi is ultimately only applied to one of them. This book maintains that it is valid to apply the term Salafi to the reformists initially, in the same way that Protestant Reformation try to return to biblical text and uphold the right of individual believers to read and understand it for themselves. The term Salafi can also be applied to other contemporary Salafis (be they politicized, jihadi, or otherwise) because they have adopted a particular type of juristic theorization and a literal understanding of both the prophetic Hadith and the Qur'anic text. They promote a return to the past, not for the purpose of renewal and adaptation to modernity but instead for confrontation with and resistance to what they consider decadent modernity from which they cannot otherwise free themselves. They also entertain a utopia modeled on an imagined past either through preaching and evangelization or through political activism and/ or by force. It is not a coincidence that the term Salafism became linked to the second type of return.

Chapter 2 examines an important issue that has marked antireformist types of modern Salafism and even fundamentalist political Islamist movements. This issue is the practice of *takfir*—the branding of an individual or a group as infidel. Specifically, I highlight how contemporary discussions overlook the distinction between abstract *takfir* (*al-takfir al-mutlaq*), which is the categorization of positions, ideas, and actions as being un-Islamic, and specific *takfir* (*takfir al-mu`ayyan*), which is the branding of particular individuals and even entire groups of Muslims as being unbelievers. This issue is relevant to the ongoing discussion of the *takfir* of rulers as opposed to unconditional allegiance regardless of whether these rulers are upright or corrupt.

Chapter 2: On Apostasy examines the practice of *takfir*—the branding of an individual or a group as infidel—including the facile categorization of entire groups as infidels. The chapter traces the genesis of *takfiri* groups and ideas across the centuries. It shows how disagreement among Salafis has reached the point of division and mutual *takfir*. It argues that while *takfir* can only be about doctrine, disagreements made non-doctrinal issues into doctrinal ones. Therefore, the chapter explores modern groups' shifting interpretations of classical texts, and splits within the trends over these interpretations. Salafis generally hold that primary religious texts are self-explanatory and literally true. They do not need interpretation but must be taken as self-evident. These groups may tolerate differences in limited areas of ritual and law, but not in theology. Their intolerance is at the root of the stagnation that has affected some parts of the Muslim world.

This leads us to chapter 3, which discusses how Salafi political transformation interacts with the contemporary political religiosity of Islamist movements (as opposed to the unfortunate but widely used term political Islam). I discuss how the interaction between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafism of the Arabian Peninsula led Salafi currents to shift away from obedience to the Muslim ruler and toward an explosive mix of Salafism and jihadism, describing how sociopolitical conditions in regions marked by sectarianism and weak state control facilitated its spread.

Chapter 3: Religious Associations and Political Movements sheds light on the early proliferation of Salafi groups outside the Arab Peninsula, including quietist forms in Egypt and the Levant, which were not always Hanbali, challenged modernization at the state level, and sought to impose social control on liberties. It highlights that there was no iron wall between Salafism and Sufism when it came to religious revival. However, Salafi associations were set up in the cities to provide an outlet for religious



enthusiasm that could compete with Sufism. This early form of popularizing Salafism and Reformism both overlapped and diverged on many issues. This chapter argues that all Salafi movements are modern in the sense that they are ideological movements that emerged in the modern world, using modern means and terminology to organize, and as a result of the pressures of the modern world itself. They reject modernism ideologically while making instrumental use of its products.

Chapter 4 examines Wahhabism and its evolution. In its early days, Wahhabism was a religious movement that allied itself with a powerful and politically ambitious tribal chieftainship in order to more effectively impose its oversimplified conception of tawhid (monotheism) and strict practicing of religious commandments on communities that had embraced "innovations" of popular religiosity and religious permissiveness. This involved the takfir of those who rejected the Wahhabi message, which justified waging jihad against them. Over time, Wahhabism transformed into a religious institution, state madhab (religious legal doctrine), and state ideology in Saudi Arabia; put differently, it transformed into a Salafism of obedience to ruling authority. Wahhabism gradually evolved from using political power in the service of spreading its madhab and rejecting everything "strange" and new as a bid`a (innovation) to serving the logic and interests of the state. The state has subjugated the Wahhabi religious establishment to the extent that the latter has to justify the marginalization of the doctrine itself. In reaction to this shift, other Salafi movements began to appeal to the original teachings of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792 CE / 1115-1206 ^^) and others against the official Wahhabism, including meetings of the minds with Saudi religious and political opposition movements.

Chapter 4: Wahhabism in Context discusses Wahhabism and its evolution. It argues that Wahhabis did not go back to the past in search of a reconciliation of religion and modernity. Rather, they returned to an imagined past in order to restore it. Wahhabism shows that when a Salafi-type religious movement is transformed into an establishment supported by the state, it will generate into a dissident Salafism motivated by many factors. The chapter further highlights the vast difference between Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, who viewed obedience to the ruler as a pillar of organized Islamic society; and "modern" salafi-jihadists, who declare the ruler an infidel and permit revolt against him. The chapter also examines the way Wahhabism's cooptation by the Saudi state had led to the rise of dissident Salafism that has fed the violent groups.

The Conclusion asserts that differences between Islamist movements cannot be explained simply with reference to juristic disagreements over how to understand the Qur'an and the Sunna. Rather, we must take account of currently existing social and political realities, including struggles for leadership. Islamic movements must also be understood in light of their relationship with various patterns of religiosity: popular, institutional, political, etc. Further, this chapter observes that Islamist movements are not conservative; truly conservative Islamic thought is hostile to any attempt to impose so-called religious utopias on reality, just as conservative secular thought is opposed to the application of revolutionary utopias. True conservative Islamic thought accepts the ideal, but not its application to reality. Rather, it tends to view this ideal past as a moral compass by which the Muslim is guided.

Throughout the book, I refute any sort of natural intellectual progression from the jurists who were retroactively labeled Salafis (having also been called Ahl al-Hadith, then Ahl al-Sunna wa al Jama`a) to Taqi al-Din Abu al-Abbas Ahmad Ibn Abd al-Halim Ibn Taymiyya al-Harrani (1263-1328 CE / 661-728 CE), then from him to Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, and then to the jihadi Salafi movements of the present day.

Political movements are not ideas or texts but, rather, social phenomena. And from the perspective of the history of ideas itself, Ibn Taymiyya was not the Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (780-855 CE / 164-241 CE) of his day, nor was Ibn Abd al-Wahhab the Ibn Taymiyya of his days. Apart from differences in the level and scope of knowledge and intellectual production, each of these figures produced thoughts in the context of his own era; as such, they were inspired by the thoughts of their predecessors, but when they appealed to specific juristic traditions for support or justification, they tailored the traditions to their goals and the age in which they were living, interpreting the ideas and presumed attitudes of the Prophet and his companions from their own perspective—and as a consequence, changing them. <>

## **BAGHDĀD: FROM ITS BEGINNINGS TO THE 14TH CENTURY** edited by Jens Scheiner and Isabel Toral [Series: Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section I The Near and Middle East, Brill, 9789004513365]

Baghdād: From its Beginnings to the 14th Century offers an exhaustive handbook that covers all possible themes connected to the history of this urban complex in Iraq, from its origins rooted in late antique Mesopotamia up to the aftermath of the Mongol invasion in 1258.

Against the common perception of a city founded 762 in a vacuum, which, after experiencing a heyday in a mythical “golden age” under the early Abbāsids, entered since 900 a long period of decline that ended with a complete collapse by savage people from the East in 1258, the volume emphasizes the continuity of Baghdād’s urban life, and shows how it was marked by its destiny as caliphal seat and cultural hub.

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The present handbook is the result of a conference organized by the editors in Berlin in 2013, enriched by the additional contributions of several colleagues to fill remaining gaps. From the beginning, the aim was to produce an exhaustive volume that would cover all possible themes connected to the urban complex of Baghdād, from its origins rooted in Sasanian Mesopotamia up to the Mongol period, and, thus, to provide the reader with a history of this metropolis and its diverse inhabitants from numerous perspectives.

The guiding principle was to take a spatial approach – that is, to focus on political, social, cultural and economic activities that took place in Baghdād’s large urban area, which covered some seven thousand hectares, as well as its hinterland. By hinterland we refer to the alluvial plain (*sawād*) around the city that

is characterized by the channel of the Tigris River, the irrigation canal system connecting the Euphrates and Tigris (west of Baghdād) and the fertile Diyāla Plains northeast of Baghdād, as well as the irrigation canals watering the land east of the city, which is called in some geographical sources the Nahr Būq District (northeast of Baghdād) and the Kalwādhā District (southeast of Baghdād). The urban space and the hinterland have always been symbiotically connected, following the general rule that, even when the density of settlement varies over the course of time, a city cannot live without the agricultural production of the hinterland, and, likewise, the hinterland benefits from the urban markets and the goods produced in the city. From a wider spatial perspective, Baghdād and its hinterland lie in the middle of the area dominated by the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, which is referred to by the imprecise modern term Mesopotamia (derived from Greek *mésopotamói* [The Land between Two Rivers]). The northern region of this riverscape is called al-Jazīra (The Island) in this volume, following the Arabic terminology employed in geographical and historical works, and is characterized by mountains and deep valleys. Because irrigation is difficult in this terrain, it is, in contrast to the areas lying south of it, a region with rainfed agriculture. The area of the riverscape, roughly from Takrīt, north of Sāmarrā' and Baghdād, to al-Baṣra, close to the Persian Gulf, is an extraordinarily rich agricultural region, irrigated by a dense system of canals. In this volume (as well as in the Arabic geographical literature) it is called Iraq (Arab. al- Irāq). It is the region where both riverbeds come closest to each other. Iraq, thus, includes what was called previously Babylonia or southern Mesopotamia. The southern area of the riverscape, with its marshland and lakes, is referred to in this book as southern Iraq, again following Pre-Modern Arabic terminology.<sup>7</sup> This wider spatial framework exceeding Baghdād's urban space and hinterland will, however, only be mentioned when relevant.

In terms of chronology, the book's scope extends beyond the time frame of the Abbāsīd dynasty's rule. Starting in Late Antiquity (i.e. in the 3rd century), with the rule of the Sasanian dynasty in the just mentioned area, it describes the history of the urban space of Baghdād up to the 14th century. In so doing, we deliberately place Madīnat al-Salām (The City of Peace), as the palatial complex founded by Caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 754-775) in 762 was called, into the late antique and early Islamic context of the urban history of Iraq. We also go beyond the usual tipping point of 1258, in which the Mongols conquered Baghdād and killed the last Abbāsīd caliph residing in the city, in order to show the continuity of urban life against the common perception of the coming of a new Islamic order or a societal collapse caused by savage people from the East. Baghdād did not come into being exactly in 762, but existed, albeit on a much smaller scale, even before al-Manṣūr's palatial city, which was, therefore, not founded in a vacuum. Nor did it disappear after 1258, but continued as an important regional center and academic hub, as this handbook will show.

We have subdivided the above-mentioned time frame (the 3rd to 14th centuries) into the following six periods: the Sasanian and Early Islamic period, the Early Abbāsīd period, the Būyīd period, the Saljūq period, the Late Abbāsīd period and the Ilkhanid period. The main criterion for this periodization is the change in the dynasty that effectively ruled Baghdād and its hinterland at the time. Thus, we stick to the following well-known dates of caesura:

- 224 (The Sasanian King Ardashīr I killed the Parthian King Ardavan [or Arthabanus] IV and succeeded him in the rule of Iran and Iraq);

- 762 (Caliph al-Manṣūr founded his palatial city and, thus, made the urban complex of Baghdād the capital of the Abbāsīd Empire)
- 945 (The Daylamite commander Aḥmad b. Būya conquered Baghdād and made it one of the centers of the Būyīd Empire)
- 1055 (The Turkmen military leader Tuḡhril Beg conquered Baghdād and made it one of the centers of the Saljūq Empire)
- 1150s (Caliph al-Muqtafi gained control over Baghdād and reestablished it as the capital of an Abbāsīd dominion, albeit this time only in Iraq)
- 1258 (The Mongol commander Hülegü conquered Baghdād and made it one of the centers of the Ilkhanid Empire)

Adhering to these geographical and temporal frames, we have grouped the chapters in this handbook into thematic parts that cover the development of the urban topography and building activities in the 8th century (Part 1, see also the thematic introduction), the political history of Baghdād (Parts 2 and 3), social and cultural practices within the political setting, in particular at courts (Part 4), the field of education (Part 5) and the religious realm (Part 6).

It must be acknowledged, however, that certain thematic gaps have proved to be inevitable. For instance, it would have been interesting to include numerous other themes: a detailed portrayal of Baghdādī women and children and their role in urban society (see Figure 0.1) and women as donors of pious endowments, an in-depth analysis of urban social movements and the reasons for the frequent street violence in Baghdād, a depiction of the Baghdādī underworld, a chapter dedicated to the slave-soldiers, another to the climate history of the city and its hinterland, as well as a detailed history of the urban economy, the financial markets and the *sūqs* – to name just a few examples. We have tried to supplement some of these gaps in our thematic introduction and by adding several shorter More-to-Know chapters.

These gaps also have to be placed into the context of the difficulties connected with the primary sources. Particularly unfortunate is the scarcity of material remains, which forces researchers to rely almost exclusively on written sources, in particular for the reconstruction of Baghdād's topography and building history. This results in a high degree of uncertainty about the actual shape of the city during the various periods of its existence. Just to give an example, it is not even certain that the famous palatial city founded by al-Manṣūr was circular. The reasons for the scarcity of material remains are manifold: a) the use of fragile building materials (burnt or sun-dried bricks, wood, few stones), b) the numerous natural disasters in and conquests of Baghdād, which sometimes led to the massive destruction of buildings and urban infrastructure, and c) the relatively limited building activity in the Late Abbāsīd and Ilkhanid periods compared to previous centuries. Thus, the very few excavations that have taken place in Baghdād have not brought to light much new evidence. Unfortunately, the same holds true for the archival record and documentary sources. In the period of investigation here, archives had not only seldom been established and, even if they existed, archival material has not survived to the present day. Regarding documentary sources pertaining to Baghdād, we have mostly silver and gold coins, numerous manuscripts, some plates and glassware as well as embroideries (*ṭirāz*) but very few inscriptions.

Written texts, with all the problems they pose in terms of understanding and interpretation, remain our main source of historical information for these periods.



Finally, there is also the problem that in many texts (primary sources and research bibliography alike) Baghdād is used as a placeholder for the Abbāsīd period as a whole. There are good reasons for this, since the fate of the city was strongly connected to that of the Abbāsīd Caliphate and linked to the ups and downs of the dynasty. Many political actors and cultural agents of the early centuries of the Abbāsīd

Caliphate were either Baghdādīs or had spent longer periods of their lives in Baghdād, and cultural and intellectual activities up to the late 10th century were centralized and focused on the Abbāsīd court. However, we have made a strong effort not to transform this book into a general cultural and intellectual history of the Abbāsīd period by extending the scope of the volume to Baghdād’s hinterland and by including actors, institutions and activities that exceeded the boundaries of Baghdād to some extent.

### Outline of the Handbook

After a thematic introduction that includes a definition of a (palatial) city and an overview of the topography and the social groups of Baghdād, authored by the editors, the first part titled “The Foundation of Madīnat al-Salām and Its Legends” focuses on al-Manṣūr’s palatial city, The City of Peace, which was the heart of early Baghdād. The first contribution by Isabel Toral studies the legends surrounding the foundation of the palatial city in 762 and discusses their cultural resonance. The author argues that these legends, being part of a wider Mesopotamian discourse and symbolizing the birth of a new era, the universal power of the Abbāsīd dynasty and the civilizing program of its founder, may also have influenced al-Manṣūr’s actions at that time. The next chapter by Bernard O’Kane draws an outline of the architectural and artistic legacy of pre-Mongol Baghdād. After a detailed description of Madīnat al-Salām and the first urban structures of Baghdād the author presents extant material remains of the time, such as Qur’ān and illuminated manuscripts as well as textiles that were produced in Baghdād and the architectural remains of the Late Abbāsīd period. The remaining contributions of the first part are two More-to-Know chapters. In the first Johannes Thomann analyzes the accounts of the horoscope cast for the foundation of the City of Peace, questioning the historicity of the transmitted texts, and stresses that this and other horoscopes provide important evidence of the practice of astronomy and astrology at the beginning of the Abbāsīd period. The second More-to-Know chapter critically reevaluates the evidence from original sources and previous research for the circularity of Madīnat al-Salām. Because both are quite problematic an exact circularity cannot be established beyond doubt. Thus, it has to be taken into account that al-Manṣūr’s palatial city may have been of a roundish or even oval shape.

Starting with the Sasanian period, the second part titled “A Historical Overview from Late Antiquity to the Mongol Period” illustrates the history of Baghdād in early Abbāsīd, Būyīd, Saljūq, late Abbāsīd and Ilkhanid times (8th to 14th centuries). In the first chapter, Parvaneh Pourshariati studies the pre-history of Baghdād by describing the urban complex of Ctesiphon and its surroundings (located ca. 40km south of Baghdād) in the Parthian and Sasanian eras. She argues that this urban complex consisting of several “cities” and various social groups was the precursor to Baghdād’s topographical and social composition. Then Jens Scheiner narrates the history of the early Abbāsīd dynasty (749-945) by focusing on the relationship between the caliphs’ military activities and their construction of palatial cities. The author argues that starting with al-Saffāh a trajectory of caliphal urban constructions for the military up to the first half of the 10th century can be observed. Moreover, the contribution emphasizes caliphal succession, clusters of father-son relationships within the Abbāsīd family and individuals that shared power with the caliphs or usurped it from them. Next, Nuha Alshaar covers the political and social events that took place in Baghdād under the rule of the Būyīds (945-1055). She thereby argues that urban rivalry and struggle caused the emergence of a fragmented society in the city with reinforced social boundaries across intellectual, religious and ethnic lines. Vanessa van Renterghem continues the

historical overview by describing the developments that occurred after the Saljūqs seized power in Baghdād in 1055 and explains how, in the first half of the 12th century, the Abbāsīd caliphs regained some importance and financial and military strength in a busy and still evolving metropolis (1055-1150s). She discovers an increased mobility of the political, military and scholarly elites who moved from Khurāsān to Baghdād and the role particularly women played as patrons in this period. The late Abbāsīd Caliphate (1160-1258) as a period of political, economic and cultural revival is then treated by Hend Gilli-Elewy, who focuses on how Caliph al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh (r. 1180-1225) regained control of the army and how he redefined the administration to center around himself by means of his *futuwwa* ideology. Michal Biran, for her part, sketches the processes that ultimately led to the Mongol conquest of Baghdād in 1258, followed by an overview of the ensuing historical and social developments under Ilkhanid rule (1240s-1330s). She particularly negates the mythical dimensions this conquest acquired and underlines the impact Ilkhanid rulers and their administrations had in rebuilding Baghdād as a striving intellectual center with a viable economy. Finally, Richard Bulliet analyzes Baghdād's and its hinterland's long-term economic development and trade patterns in regard to agricultural production. He proposes to interpret the evidence as a relocation trend of peasants spurred by their conversion to Islam. Moreover, he argues for the impact of climate change as a central cause for the economic (and demographic) decline that struck Baghdād and its hinterland in the tenth and eleventh centuries.

The third part “Baghdād's Neighboring Empires” focuses on the Abbāsīd caliphs' relations to the Byzantine, Carolingian and Chinese Empires from the 8th to the 12th centuries, as reflected in the exchange of embassies and trade missions as well as in cultural contacts and occasional minor military encounters. Although Baghdād as a city and as the Abbāsīd capital scarcely figures in the sources of its most immediate neighbors. In this context, Olof Heilo draws a colorful panorama of the comparatively intense and continuous contact between the Byzantine Empire and the Abbāsīd Caliphate. This was a complex relationship characterized by competition, antagonism and military conflict, but also one defined by interaction, mutual understanding and respect. Moreover, the author stresses that while religious struggle (*jihād*) played a central role from the Muslim point of view, the Byzantines were far more struck by the Abbāsīd accumulation of cultural capital through the Greek-Arabic translation movement. The second contribution in this part, by Kirill Dimitriev and Klaus Oschema, analyzes the relationship between the Frankish kings and the Abbāsīd caliphs from both perspectives and focuses on the representation of Baghdād and western Europe in Latin sources and Arabic texts. They conclude that although little was known by each society about the other this does not mean that both societies were not interested in the outside world, but only that they set different emphases than we would do today. Finally, Angela Schottenhammer delineates in her More-to-Know chapter the Sino- Abbāsīd relations in the Early Abbāsīd period based on Chinese sources and Arabic travelogues, as well as some archaeological evidence. She concludes that trade in luxury goods and official missions between the Chinese and Abbāsīd courts created a close connection between both empires, despite the previous military encounter in the Battle of Talas in 751.

The fourth part “The Abbāsīd Court and Its Legacy” describes the impact of Abbāsīd court culture on the literary production in Baghdād from the 8th to the 11th centuries, and how it became a model for other courts in the Islamicate World (including Baghdād) and survived as a powerful icon in Arabic literature. Only thus did Baghdād become the paradigm of the perfect city in a golden age in the Arabic literary *imaginaire*. The part starts with Letizia Osti's contribution in which she draws a vivid tableau of



Baghdādī court culture in the Early Abbāsīd period (9th-10th centuries) and demonstrates how the court was presented as a space of interaction between the caliph and his male and female courtiers. As Beatrice Gruendler shows in her contribution on poetry in Baghdad, Abbāsīd courtly culture also rendered a model for the households of the elite and middle class in the city, who strove to imitate the caliphal court by forming their own poetry sessions and literary salons. Hence, poetry (and literature) became ubiquitous and was cultivated in mosques, courtyards, streets and book markets, making Baghdad, that also served as inspiration for a new type of “urban” verse, a place of publication and reception of poetry. Then Isabel Toral describes how the development of Arabic belles-lettres and fine artistic prose owed much to the stylistic refinement introduced by the administrative elite in Baghdad and how the city profited from the influx of intellectuals from elsewhere. She argues that, in contrast to scholars of the Islamic sciences, litterateurs were so dependent on patronage that they left the city gradually when the Abbāsīd court and the elite was unable to support them, leading to a decline of literary production in the city from the 10th century onward. A final More-to-Know chapter also by Isabel Toral provides a critical view on the *topos* of Baghdādī culture as a golden age. The author argues to see this golden age as a back projection from later periods (including the 19th and 20th centuries) and to take contingencies into account when speaking about the history of Baghdad.

The fifth part “Institutions of Learning and Fields of Knowledge” comprises a description of the various Islamic and non-Islamic sciences pursued in Baghdad from the 8th to the 14th centuries. Beside the religious fields of knowledge of Sunnī and Shīī Islam as well as the institutions where these sciences were taught, it presents philosophy with all its subfields and the natural sciences. The part starts with the contribution by Sebastian Günther who focuses on the informal and institutionalized modes of learning in the Islamic sciences, such as Sunnī and Shīī law, Prophetical traditions, Qur’ānic studies, Arabic grammar and lexicography, theology, mysticism and history, and highlights the biographies of important scholars active in Baghdad. Further, he explores the connectedness of these sciences with the cultural ideal of *adab*. Placing the developments of Baghdad into a wider context he argues for a transformation of the Islamicate civilization into a “knowledge society”. A More-to-Know chapter by Mehmetcan Akpınar investigates the contribution Medinan scholars active in the Islamic sciences made to Baghdad’s emergence as a new intellectual center. He argues that the early Abbāsīd caliphs were eager to benefit from Medinan religious and legal expertise in particular, thus causing an influx of scholars from Medina to Baghdad. Finally, the contribution by Damien Janos provides an intriguing overview of the blossoming of philosophical and scientific learning in Baghdad during the Early Abbāsīd and Būyid periods, as well as of the main ideas and scientific approaches of philosophers, astronomers and astrologers and physicians of that time. The author explains the exceptional quality of this interdisciplinary scholarship first by the fact that Baghdad centralized much of the intellectual activity (as well as a fair amount of economic wealth), second by the strong presence of Christian inhabitants and their heritage in the city and third by the administrative elite that resulted in extensive patronage networks.

The sixth and final part titled “The Religious Communities” presents a survey of the religious groups in Baghdad and its hinterland from Late Antiquity to the Mongol period, their social composition, institutions and creeds. In the first contribution, Christopher Melchert introduces traditionalist and rationalist variants of Sunnism and Shīīsm and outlines the early Abbāsīd caliphs’ diverse attitudes towards Sunnī and/or Shīī scholars and groups in Baghdad. In this context, he argues that the dichotomy

between rationalists and traditionalists is too simple and that a third category, i.e. semi-rationalist Sunnīs and Shī'īs, should be introduced to correctly describe the situation in ninth- and tenth-century Baghdād. In the last More-to-Know chapter David Bennett highlights the intellectual participation of a different group, the so-called Mu tazilites, in the development of theological and philosophical thought in Baghdād from the 8th to the 10th centuries by summarizing the group's main doctrines and ideas. Thereafter, Pavel Basharin focuses on the phenomenon of the Ṣūfī school of early Abbāsīd Baghdād. By presenting a set of famous Ṣūfī scholars, including their works and thought, he illustrates the interactions of individual mystics with other local scholars and political authorities. The author argues for a transition from renunciation (*zuhd*) to mysticism or Sufism (*taṣawwuf*) and describes the institutionalization of Baghdādī Sufism into a distinct Islamic tradition. Turning to non-Muslim groups, Michael Morony portrays the major Christian communities in Baghdād and its hinterland and sketches their development from the Sasanian to the Late Abbāsīd periods. The author arrives at the conclusion that government intervention in Christian affairs was a current feature of these times, but that wide-reaching anti-Christian measures and regulations were exceptional cases in the long-lasting peaceful cohabitation of Christians and Muslims in Baghdād. In particular, the so-called Umar's Stipulations did not play any role in the religious life of the city. Thereafter, Y. Zvi Stampfer illustrates Jewish presence in Iraq and Baghdād in Late Antiquity and under Muslim rule. He shows that, especially after the main Jewish academies moved to Baghdād in the late ninth century, the city became a vibrant center of intellectual and spiritual life for Jews, who also joined academic discussions there. Moreover, anti-Jewish activities were rare, thus making Baghdād an important center of Jewry in the world. Finally, Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst portrays the three most important non-monotheistic groups in Baghdād and its hinterland, namely the Zoroastrians, Manichaeans and Gnostics (in particular the Mandeans), stressing that almost nothing is known about the groups' religious sites and festivals in the city. This has to do, as the author argues, with the groups' small numbers and their different approaches to urban society: while Zoroastrians and Manichaeans were likely to have been present in cities, including Baghdād, until the 10th century, Gnostics preferred rural areas for their living.

The volume ends with an epilogue, an appendix – a survey of original sources on the topography of Baghdād – and the usual index.

In the above-mentioned inaugural address, Josef van Ess calls to “forget Baghdād”, because today it is a mere shadow of what it was in earlier times. He then qualifies his appeal by stating to do so only after this handbook project has come to an end. With the end of this academic endeavor we hope to have contributed to Baghdād's unforgettable eternal fame and that the images we have drawn about the past will enlighten those who live in the present, may it be in Baghdād or in other parts of the world. *Wo kämen wir sonst hin? <>*

## SUHRAWARDĪ'S ILLUMINATIONISM: A PHILOSOPHICAL STUDY by Jari Kaukua [Series: Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science. Texts and Studies, Brill, 9789004514096]

In **SUHRAWARDĪ'S ILLUMINATIONISM**, Jari Kaukua offers a new interpretation of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī's (d. 1191 CE) illuminationist (*ishrāqī*) philosophy. Commonly portrayed as a philosophically inclined mystic, Suhrawardī appears here as a perspicacious critic of Avicenna who developed his critique into an alternative philosophical system.

Focusing on metaphysics and theory of science, Kaukua argues that Suhrawardī's illuminationist philosophy combines rigorous metaphysical monism with a modest but positive assessment of scientific explanation. This philosophical core of **SUHRAWARDĪ'S ILLUMINATIONISM** is reconcilable with but independent of the mystical side of the *shaykh al-ishrāq*.

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Shihāb al-Dīn Abū l-Futūḥ Yahyā ibn Ḥabash ibn Amīrak al-Suhrawardī, the *shaykh al-ishrāq* or the executed *shaykh (al-shaykh al-maqtūl)*, was an eccentric but brilliant thinker who raised both awe and ire in Syria and Anatolia at the second half of the twelfth century CE, and met his fate at just under the age of forty in Aleppo, on the year 1191 CE. Despite his brief career, Suhrawardī left behind a considerable body of writing which, among other things, articulates a new philosophical system known as illuminationism (*ḥikmat al-ishrāq* or *ḥikma ishrāqīya*), but no devout students who would have inaugurated a tradition of teaching his works on the basis of first-hand acquaintance. Although Suhrawardī's works were read by some philosophers of the subsequent generation, it took the better part of a century before the first commentaries were written, initially it seems by the Jewish philosopher Izz al-Dawla ibn Kammūna (d. 1284), whose commentary on the *Talwīḥāt* was finished in 1268, and then

by Shams al-Dīn al-Shahrazūrī (d. after 1288), who finished his commentary on the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* in the 1280s, having earlier written a commentary on the *Talwīḥāt*.

This gap between Suhrawardī and his earliest commentators means that Suhrawardī's illuminationism has always been an interpretative enigma that invites various, sometimes conflicting approaches. While Ibn Kammūna seems to have felt no strict allegiance to illuminationism and only commented on a work that is a relatively innocent epitome of Avicennian philosophy, Shahrazūrī was a devout illuminationist who chose to write on the only text in which Suhrawardī presents his new doctrine in an unadulterated form. Consequently, it was Shahrazūrī's understanding of illuminationism that would largely determine the ways in which Suhrawardī was subsequently read. Now, the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* is a dense and complex work that is not entirely free of internal tensions. One tangible tension concerns the relation between Suhrawardī's strategy of marketing the book and some of the book's central content. The author's preface to the book claims that it is the result of first-personal intuitive experience triggered by sustained ascetic exercise, instead of a fruit of discursive study, philosophical debate, and logical analysis. Suhrawardī also maintains that what he is about to present is a perennial doctrine already endorsed by ancient philosophers who preceded Aristotle, as well as by a series of historical and mythical figures of both Greek and Persian provenance. By contrast, the entire first half of the book consists of critical analysis directed mainly at Avicenna's (d. 1037) revised Peripatetic system, and much in the second half also rings familiar to anyone with a basic understanding of Avicennian metaphysics. This kind of material can scarcely result from pure intuition, and what is more, many of Suhrawardī's arguments are frequently discussed at greater length in other, explicitly discursive works of his. Moreover, Suhrawardī's critique is part of the broader context of the twelfth-century reception of Avicenna's philosophy, an endeavour that preoccupied most major thinkers in the Islamic philosophy and theology of the time.

In this situation, Shahrazūrī's solution is to take Suhrawardī's marketing strategy at face value and amplify it into a historical narrative that borders on the hagiographical. Following a conventional account of the acquisition of knowledge as the goal of human life, Shahrazūrī's preface to his commentary focuses on the distinction between two kinds of theoretical knowledge that Suhrawardī had made in his own inaugural words to the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*. However, where Suhrawardī spoke of "deification" (*ta'alluh*), or immediate intuitive knowledge, and knowledge acquired through scientific investigation (*baḥth*) as hierarchically related but complementary requisites for the ideal illuminationist philosopher, Shahrazūrī laments the historical nadir of his own time, in which the tradition of intuitive knowledge has withered, and spiritually infertile investigation and debate prosper in its stead. This situation, dominated by Avicenna's Peripatetic philosophy, is one that Suhrawardī came to set aright:

That kept increasing until the aforementioned time, when one who was prepared and from among those dissatisfied with mere scientific investigation wanted to acquire something of the real wisdom as it should be. That was difficult for him, for the way that would lead an individual to that objective had been lost. The way of wisdom remained blocked and troubled, until the star of felicity rose, the dawn of wisdom appeared on the horizon of certainty, and the lights of realities illumined from the highest spot through the appearing of our master [...]. He set out to restore what they had corrupted, to bring to appearance what the ages had obliterated, to lay out in detail what they had summarised, to explain what they had hinted at and designated by symbols, to solve what was incomprehensible and obscure, and to revive what had died and fallen into oblivion. He resolutely rolled up his sleeves to devote to the first sages, defend them,

and contradict anyone who would refute them. He strove most intensely to reflect upon them, doing all that with insight and expertise (*‘alā baṣīratin wa-khibra*), not blindly or confusedly but through revelations (*kushūf*) that emerge from both subtle and hard exercise and from complete and sound investigation. May God be pleased with him, he was prominent in both wisdoms, that which is revealed and that which is a matter of investigation (*al-kashfiyati wa-l-baḥṭhiya*), having penetrated the depths of both.

Although Shahrāzūrī concludes that Suhrawardī is a master of both revealed wisdom and scientific investigation, his rhetorical emphasis is clear. Suhrawardī’s expertise in philosophical debate and analysis seems like an afterthought, added to justify his departure from its shackles: the *shaykh al-ishrāq* knew and fully mastered that which he chose to downplay as secondary in importance, instead of opting for an alternative path because it appeared more convenient to him. Shahrāzūrī’s focus is firmly on Suhrawardī’s mystical credentials and his acquisition of perennial truths that are inaccessible to the Peripatetic followers of Avicenna.

This narrative of Suhrawardī as primarily a perennialist mystic, and secondarily a philosopher addressing the topics of debate of his day, was adopted by Henry Corbin, whose pioneering work on Suhrawardī has made a lasting impression on both academic and popular perception of the latter’s illuminationism. For Corbin, Shahrāzūrī’s commentary was “the key to Suhrawardī’s work”,<sup>6</sup> and in his numerous publications, he consistently advocated the commentator’s portrait of Suhrawardī, frequently supplementing it with highly imaginative elaborations of his own concerning the alleged implications of Suhrawardī’s Persian pantheon.<sup>7</sup> Corbin’s portrait of a mystical thinker informed by arcane Persian wisdom has proven very influential both in the West and in Iran, and it is still endorsed by a number of scholars. By contrast, a more recent trend in Western research on Suhrawardī frequently pits itself in opposition to the Corbinian paradigm, emphasising Suhrawardī’s close relation to the Avicennian system, despite the consistent critique to which he subjects it. Initiated by Hossein Ziai’s monograph *Knowledge and Illumination*, which focused on epistemology and theory of science, an increasing number of scholars have shown that various aspects of Suhrawardī’s thought are incomprehensible if we interpret it in isolation from its immediate context, the twelfth-century reception of Avicennian philosophy.

This division between scholarly approaches thus mirrors a tension within the *Hikmat al-ishrāq* and Suhrawardī’s literary heritage in general. Indeed, part of the debate revolves around the question of which types of work are central to Suhrawardī’s philosophical objectives. It is hardly controversial that the central work from the point of view of Suhrawardī’s novel illuminationist system is the *Hikmat al-ishrāq*, which Suhrawardī completed by 1186, but as already mentioned, this concise and enigmatic book has two faces: although it is clearly philosophical in its core and indebted to Avicenna in many of its arguments, it introduces an entirely new vocabulary based on the concept of light (*nūr*) and makes frequent references to a perennial tradition of wisdom. Suhrawardī develops both aspects in isolation in his other works, and the conflicting strands of scholarship tend to employ different works as keys to the enigma of the *Hikmat al-ishrāq*. Corbin frequently foregrounded a group of short texts written in both Arabic and Persian, in which Suhrawardī employs the literary means of symbol and allegory to transmit various philosophical ideas. According to Corbin, these texts were a form of initiation designed to guide the imagination of their reader to a superior understanding, which culminates in a mystical experience that remains inaccessible to philosophical concepts and discursive reason. Read in the right manner, the allegories would yield a first-personal experience of the truths the *Hikmat al-ishrāq* introduces in the

form of a doctrine. On the other hand, if one methodically unravels the symbols and allegories in these brief treatises, they appear as little more than charming castings of standard Avicennian metaphysics, cosmology, and eschatology. Indeed, John Walbridge has presented a convincing case for the claim that instead of a culmination of Suhrawardī's philosophical writing, these are youthful works, designed to aid the philosophical novice by means of an imaginative rendering of what might otherwise be rather arid doctrine.

An alternative approach to the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* takes its cue from the observation that the book's rigorous philosophical argumentation is a natural continuation of themes developed in Suhrawardī's so-called Peripatetic works. These are philosophical treatises, in which he engages at length with Avicenna's philosophy, and the ones Suhrawardī himself mentions as central are the epitomic *Talwīḥāt* and *Lamaḥāt*, the much more voluminous *Mashāri' wa-l-muṭāraḥāt*, and the appendical *Muqāwamāt*. This is hardly a surprise, given that Suhrawardī seems to have composed these philosophical works in parallel, and makes frequent cross-references between them. What is more, in the introduction to the *Mashāri' wa-l-muṭāraḥāt*, Suhrawardī himself instructs his reader to study the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* only in connection with these texts:

Well then, my brothers, this is a book, which contains the three sciences and which I have composed upon your request. I have introduced in it investigations and principles that you will not find in any other book, that are very useful, and that emerge from and are honed through my efforts. I do not thereby depart very much from what the Peripatetics have adopted, although I have laid down apt points and subtleties (*nukatan wa-laṭā'if*), which point towards (*tūmi`u ilā*) noble principles that are additional to what they have introduced. One who is just (*anṣafa*) will find it, after perusing people's books, to be more adequate than anything else (*wāfiyan bi-mā lam yaḥayruhu bihi*), whereas one who does not become proficient in the investigative sciences (*fī l-'ulūmi l-baḥthīya*) by means of it should have no access to my book titled *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*. This book should be read before it and after the epitomic tried-and-true account (*al-taḥqīq*) called the *Talwīḥāt*.

Suhrawardī explicitly says that his method in the *Mashāri'* is discursive: he will investigate the comparative superiority of various theoretical claims by pitting them against each other, and seeing which ones survive critical scrutiny. He also says that he remains chiefly within the purview of Peripateticism, although some of his forays will hint towards the illuminationist doctrine that is first presented at length in the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*. However, as we will see repeatedly in the following chapters, even these excursions from Avicennian Peripateticism are frequently introduced on discursive grounds, as pieces of rationally grounded theoretical claims that are superior to those of the Peripatetic. Finally, Suhrawardī urges his reader to first familiarise herself with his condensed account of the Peripatetic doctrine in the *Talwīḥāt*, to deepen her expertise by engaging with the more critical investigation in the *Mashāri'*, and only then to delve into the presentation of illuminationism proper in the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*.

In my book, this counts as a solid piece of intrinsic evidence in support of the view that the soil, from which **SUHRWARDĪ'S ILLUMINATIONISM** emerges, is discursive philosophical investigation. In other words, illuminationism is primarily a philosophical theory in a sense that is not particularly mystical, a theory that is developed in critical relation to its Peripatetic background and is designed to meet the shortcomings diagnosed in its rival. In addition to this, a statistical look at the Suhrawardian

corpus provides supporting circumstantial evidence, for we find that the philosophical works, regardless of whether the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* is included, constitute by far the weightiest part of Suhrawardī's written legacy. In the absence of a critically edited collected works, exact measurements by word count are unfeasible, but it is a safe estimate that the philosophical works amount to at least two thirds of his entire output. It is scarcely far-fetched to assume that an author would exercise his greatest effort on something that he found of central importance.

Thus, in the present book, my aim is to reconstruct the central parts of illuminationist metaphysics and theory of science on the leading hypothesis that Suhrawardī developed it as an alternative to Avicennian Peripateticism, the emerging philosophical mainstream of his time, with a specific view to meeting the challenges he himself raises in his critical discussion of it. Apart from Suhrawardī's explicit suggestion of the proper order of procedure in the preface to the *Mashāri'*, I am also motivated by the structure of the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*. The first part of the book is critical and consists of a condensed challenge to Peripateticism on various topics, all of which are spelled out at greater length in his other works, especially the *Mashāri'* and the *Muqāwamāt*. Then, in an almost axiomatic fashion and scarcely attempting to bridge the gap, Suhrawardī starts the second part by laying the foundations of his new doctrine. My interpretative cue here is that the reader is expected to bear the problems of the first part in mind, and to evaluate the new doctrine based on its capacity to meet those challenges.

In the first four chapters of the book, I will discuss the most important critical topics raised in the first part of the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*. The first two chapters are devoted to Suhrawardī's critique of the Avicennian theory of science, and they address the notion of real definition as a foundation of scientific knowledge (Chapter 1) and the method of modal logic that is employed in scientific explanation (Chapter 2). In the third chapter, we turn to metaphysics, starting with one of the debates for which Suhrawardī is especially notorious, namely his critique of the central Avicennian metaphysical concepts, such as 'existence', 'unity', and the modal concepts, as merely *i'tibārī*, or mind-dependent concepts that have no correlates in extramental reality. The fourth chapter continues the metaphysical focus by looking into Suhrawardī's critique of hylomorphism, his preliminary defence of the theory of Platonic Forms against the Avicennian counterarguments, and his theory of the metaphysical underpinnings of perception and knowledge.

The remaining chapters of the book are devoted to the illuminationist theory. In Chapter 5, I begin by introducing the conceptual foundation of illuminationist metaphysics. My aim here is to dispel some of the mystique around the new vocabulary of light (*nūr*) and appearing (*zuhūr*) by showing that Suhrawardī employs familiar arguments in introducing and justifying the new concepts. Having laid the foundation, I turn in Chapter 6 to discuss Suhrawardī's theory of emanation. I argue that the subtle changes he introduces to Avicenna's model are designed to enable a strictly monist metaphysics that reduces all perceivable variation between things to differences in degree between lights, which can all be traced back to a single source, the Light of Lights. Chapter 7 turns to Suhrawardī's theory of Forms, which I present as an attempt to reintroduce the theoretical equivalents of Avicennian essences or quiddities in the newly constructed monistic framework, whereas in Chapter 8, I discuss Suhrawardī's understanding of the sublunary world of individual corporeal instantiations of the Forms—a topic in which Suhrawardī's critique of the hylomorphist theory of corporeal substances finally bears fruit. Finally, in Chapter 9, I turn to Suhrawardī's theory of our knowledge of the world, arguing that Suhrawardī ultimately

vindicates the Avicennian *i'tibārī* concepts, but only in a seriously compromised role, in which they no longer hold of the metaphysical foundation of reality but are indispensable for the explanation of our human understanding of the world. Thus, I claim that Suhrawardī introduces a gap between metaphysics on the one hand, and human experience and science on the other. By way of closing the circle, I appeal to this gap in an explanation of how Suhrawardī can still, after all the criticism, endorse the Avicennian theory of science: in the end, the Avicennian model, in its more modest revised form, remains the best way for our science to approximate the way in which the Forms cause the appearing of the sublunary entities we try to understand.

Thus, my interpretation is decidedly anti-mystical, and I am consciously trying to paint a portrait of Suhrawardī as a philosopher. In this regard, this book is not a portrait of the historical agent that was Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī, for it remains a fact that the same person made the mystical remarks and extolled the possibility of knowledge that is superior to discursive philosophical investigation. Moreover, there are many sections in the *Hikmat al-ishrāq* that I do not address at all, such as the tentative statements Suhrawardī makes about the suspended forms (*al-suwar al-mu'allaqa*), or the eschatological and ethical sections towards the end of the book. I do think that what I present in the pages to come constitutes the core of illuminationist theory, but I also confess that my portrait would be invalidated if it ended up simply contradicting those mystical statements or the other things Suhrawardī says in his book.

Unsurprisingly, I do not think it does, and I believe that like some of his Neoplatonist forebears, Suhrawardī held that there are forms of cognition superior to discursive reasoning and empirical investigation. By the same token, I believe that Suhrawardī's mystically tinged ethics can be reconciled with the core of his theory in much the same fashion as the final parts of Avicenna's *Ishārāt*, sometimes viewed as hinting towards mystical views that go beyond his Peripatetic metaphysics, can be interpreted as philosophical ethics presented in a vocabulary borrowed from the Sufis. In any case, I hold that the core of Suhrawardī's philosophical work is too important, and too interesting, to be studied only as subordinate to the highly complex historical profile of its author. More importantly, I maintain that in its metaphysical foundation and the related theory of science, which I am about to present, **SUHRAWARDĪ'S ILLUMINATIONISM** does not rest on mystical knowledge only available to a spiritual elite, nor does Suhrawardī justify his theoretical claims by appeal to such knowledge. The culmination of the life of a philosopher on something that transcends philosophy must not be confused with the ways in which he justifies his philosophical claims. On the contrary, Suhrawardī was lucidly aware of the limited explanatory power and the incommunicability of these superior modes of cognition, and he valorised the Avicennian theory of science for precisely this reason. Finally, when it comes to Suhrawardī's noble ancient predecessors, both Greek and Persian, they can still be latched on to market my reconstruction, if one feels so inclined. They serve no role in my reconstruction only because they are inconsequential to Suhrawardī's philosophical arguments.

I believe this is the first attempt at a philosophically systematic and contextually conscientious reconstruction of Suhrawardī's illuminationism as a philosophical system. When I say this, I do not want to downplay the importance of earlier scholarship on the *shaykh al-ishrāq*. On the contrary, a book of this sort could hardly have been written even as recently as ten years ago, for it depends so heavily on outstanding recent research on Suhrawardī and the twelfth-century context in which Avicenna's



philosophy became subject to an unprecedented critical examination. Here, I am delighted to recognise my debt to the work of colleagues like Robert Wisnovsky, Fedor Benevich, and many others, whose work I amply cite in the footnotes and occasionally critically engage with. By the same token, I recognise the tentative nature of my reconstruction, and I only dare to let it out of my hands in the hope that its critical evaluation will help us to see Suhrawardī as first and foremost a philosopher in the tried-and-true sense of a thinker whose sole standards of justification are conceptual rigour, valid argumentation, and theoretical coherence.

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In his preface to the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, Suhrawardī famously paints a picture of two ideal types of philosopher and applies it to deduce a hierarchy of epistemic authority:

The ranks are many and they fall into classes, which are these: the divine sage advanced in deification (*al-ta'alluh*) but lacking in scientific investigation (*al-baḥth*), the sage who conducts scientific investigation but lacks deification, the divine sage advanced in both deification and scientific investigation, the divine sage advanced in deification but mediocre or weak in scientific investigation, the sage advanced in scientific investigation but mediocre or weak in deification, the student of deification and scientific investigation, the student of deification only, and the student of scientific investigation only. Should there come to be someone advanced in both deification and scientific investigation, the rule belongs to him and he will be God's vicegerent, but should that not take place, then [the rule] belongs to the one advanced in deification but mediocre in scientific investigation, and should [even] that not take place, then to the sage advanced in deification but lacking in scientific investigation. The world is never devoid of one advanced in deification. No rule on God's earth belongs to one who conducts scientific investigation and is advanced in it but is not advanced in deification. The world is not devoid of one advanced in deification, and he is more deserving than the one who only conducts scientific investigation, for vicegerency inevitably involves acquaintance (*al-talaqqin*). By this rule, I do not mean power (*al-taghallub*).

Suhrawardī's distinction between the illuminationist sage endowed with a divine taste of the truth and the Peripatetic philosopher forced to a laborious investigation of sublunary things is frequently interpreted as claiming a straightforward, even simplistic superiority of intuitive vision over scientific reasoning. Interestingly, this interpretative approach is common to both scholars, for whom this signals the decline of philosophy in the Islamic world, and others who greet it as the emergence of a genuinely new kind of epistemic paradigm.

In the light of the foregoing, I would argue for a more nuanced interpretation. It is clear that Suhrawardī's ideal philosopher combines both deification, or immediate intuitive vision, and the painstaking rational investigation that must resort to empirical research and search for the right definitions and middle terms through which alone phenomena become explicable. The primacy of deification does not mean that illuminationist philosophy can do without science in the Peripatetic sense. As we have seen, the deified vision on its own is subjective and incommunicable, except by means of metaphors, similes, and symbols, which are irrefutable precisely because they are meaningful only to an audience with first-hand experience of the kind of vision they express. If the illuminationist philosopher wants to share the stage with competing views and to argue for the superiority of the illuminationist model, she is bound to resort to scientific investigation and arguments based upon it. To put this

another way, the illuminationist must play by the rules of clear definition and valid argumentation that she inherits from the Peripatetic, albeit with the critical revisions we have studied in the foregoing.

Suhrawardī hints at this combination of methods throughout the preface. He begins by saying that the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* is a book written at the request of an associate to tell “what has occurred to me through tasting (*bi-l-dhawq*) in my retreats (*khalwātī*) and my strivings (*munāzalātī*)”, which might suggest that he is only reporting his personal visions through symbols and similes that are designed to resonate with the experience of his readers, for “every seeking soul has a portion of the light of God, whether small or great, and everyone who strives (*mujtahid*) will have a taste, whether deficient or perfect”. Suhrawardī then says, however, that although what he reports in the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* was not first acquired by thinking (*bi-l-fikr*) but by other means, he subsequently sought arguments in support of his claims. It is these arguments, and not the inspiration underlying them, that Suhrawardī then reports as the illuminationist doctrine. This is the only reliable method available to him, for the inspired experience is incommunicable to others who have not undergone a similar experience; or as Suhrawardī puts it elsewhere, “your observations are not an argument for anyone else, if he [...] lacks that awareness”. Finally, in addition to this fundamental problem concerning the incommunicability of these related observations, there is another one that arises from the possible incompleteness of mystical vision: unless one’s intuitive vision is perfect, encompassing the entire hierarchy of lights, it is bound to remain fragmentary. In the absence of a more wholesome vision, the only recourse is to a framework of well-defined concepts and substantiated metaphysical theory, which yield a context for understanding the vision’s full relevance.

Thus, instead of signifying allegedly superior means of epistemic justification that can be arbitrarily relied on to override contrary arguments, I suggest that we understand Suhrawardī’s notions of deification and experiential tasting as attempts at articulating the initial impetus behind the central doctrines of illuminationism, such as his metaphysical monism, the theory of emanation through double activity, and the resulting theory of Forms. It may well be that one needs to have a foundational experience that convinces one of the truth of a major metaphysical paradigm, like Suhrawardī’s monism of light (or appearing), hylomorphism, or physicalism. However, this does not mean that one’s adherence to a paradigm is bound to be uncritical, for holding a philosophical view means that one is always prepared to critically test the cogency of that view against its rivals, and this is what Suhrawardī does when he seeks arguments in favour of his views, or when he tries to meet the explanatory power of the Peripatetic theory of corporeal things.

Along the same lines, in the end of the book’s preface, Suhrawardī describes the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* as a book written “for the student of both deification and scientific investigation”, and not for a reader interested in scientific investigation, or philosophical debate, for its own sake.<sup>7</sup> And yet, as we have seen, this dense presentation of the illuminationist doctrine is rife with debate, critique, and argument in defence of the illuminationist doctrine. Instead of sheer inconsistency, we can read this as a recognition of the limits of philosophical argumentation. If a metaphysical theory meets the criteria of serious philosophy, such as internal consistency, there is no way to decisively refute it, and similarly, no argument will force a reluctant sceptic to accept such a theory. Uncommitted debate is of course possible, but there will be no end to it, and in this sense, it is doomed to remain an infertile pursuit. If the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* is a dogmatic work, it is such because it is committed to presenting the illuminationist doctrine—through philosophical argumentation. Then, however, Avicenna’s *Shifā’* is

dogmatic in exactly the same sense, given the author's commitment to the truth of his amalgam of Neoplatonism and Aristotle. If my reconstruction of the portrait of the illuminationist philosopher in the enigmatic preface of the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* is plausible, Suhrawardī is a philosopher in much the same sense as his Peripatetic rival, or any philosopher today who is sufficiently convinced of a theory to sustainably defend it through her career. By contrast, Suhrawardī's lucid recognition of the ultimate indemonstrability of our commitment to whatever foundational theory we happen to endorse is comparatively rare among philosophers, both in the twelfth century and today.

Having said all that, I admit that many steps in Suhrawardī's case for his illuminationism may not stand critical scrutiny, and a number of the claims he makes have to be accepted at face value. In many ways, the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* has the air of an epitome, or a sketch that remains to be fully fleshed out. Given the unfortunate brevity of Suhrawardī's career, this is hardly surprising, but the sketchiness of the book, along with the fragmentariness of the additional cues distributed across the other central philosophical works he wrote, left plenty of room for the commentators, none of whom were personally connected to the *shaykh al-ishrāq*, to develop illuminationism in directions that were not necessarily central to Suhrawardī, and in the worst cases, even expressly rejected by him. Of course, my own reconstruction in this book is also nourished by this fertile ambiguity, and it should be critically evaluated as such, but the one moral this observation allows us to draw is that we have to be wary of identifying the commentators' illuminationism with that of Suhrawardī himself.

For instance, although concepts like knowledge by presence or the imaginal world (*'ālam al-mithāl*) are undoubtedly there in Suhrawardī, it is a rather different question whether they are central to his illuminationist system. I have already discussed knowledge by presence in the previous chapter, and when it comes to the imaginal world, its role in the *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* seems to be very similar to the idea of the imaginal afterlife in Avicenna: it is a more or less *ad hoc* solution to a specific theological problem, and as such, it can be set aside with scarce consequences to the doctrinal foundation of illuminationism.

An example of a more misleading ascription is the projection of the idea of the primacy of essence (*aṣālat al-māhīya*) to Suhrawardī. This idea emerges when the Ṣafavid philosophers, with Mīr Dāmād and Mullā Ṣadrā at the forefront, debate about the reducibility of essence and existence to one another. Since Suhrawardī expressly argues, as we have seen, that existence is an *i'tibārī* concept, they held that since one of the two, essence or existence, must be real independently of our minds, Suhrawardī must have endorsed the reality of essence, and consequently the view that existence can be reduced to essence. Primacy of essence is still sometimes seen as a quintessentially illuminationist view, and yet it is clearly not a view Suhrawardī would have accepted, for as we have seen, Suhrawardī is a strict monist according to whom all is light and appearance, and for whom the entire distinction between essence and existence, and consequently both notions in isolation, is *i'tibārī*.

Cases like this should be borne in mind also when the mystical tendencies of later illuminationist authors are straightforwardly attributed to the *shaykh al-ishrāq* himself. To repeat what I have said above, Suhrawardī is by no means averse to the possibility of witnessing the appearing of the higher lights, and his illuminationist system is designed to accommodate that possibility. Yet this does not mean that appeal to such a mystical witnessing is a valid epistemic justification for him, or even that illuminationism, considered as a philosophical theory, culminates in such an experience. Human life may have a goal that transcends science and philosophy, which strive to formulate a veridical theoretical model of the

universe that includes a description of that goal—and yet the first-personal reaching of that goal is not a matter of *philosophy*. By the same token, the full portrait of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī would have to include aspects I have downplayed or even completely neglected here. In the end, however, I do claim that the foregoing represents the core of the doctrine of the illuminationist philosopher Suhrawardī. <>

## **MYSTICISM AND PHILOSOPHY IN AL-ANDALUS: IBN MASARRA, IBN AL-‘ARABĪ AND THE ISMĀ‘ILĪ TRADITION** by Michael Ebstein [Series: Islamic History and Civilization, Brill, 9789004255364]

Muslim Spain gave rise to two unusual figures in the mystical tradition of Islam: Ibn Masarra (269/883-319/931) and Ibn al- Arabī (560/1165-638/1240). Representing, respectively, the beginning and the pinnacle of Islamic mysticism in al-Andalus, Ibn Masarra and Ibn al- Arabī embody in their writings a type of mystical discourse which is quite different from the Sufi discourse that evolved in the Islamic east during the 9th-12th centuries.

In **MYSTICISM AND PHILOSOPHY IN AL-ANDALUS**, Michael Ebstein points to the Ismā īlī tradition as one possible source which helped shape the distinct intellectual world from which both Ibn Masarra and Ibn al- Arabī derived. By analyzing their writings and the works of various Ismā īlī authors, Michael Ebstein unearths the many links that connect the thought of Ibn Masarra and Ibn al- Arabī to the Ismā īlī tradition.

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This study set out to demonstrate the significant contribution of the Isma'ili tradition to the development of mystical-philosophical thought in medieval Andalusī. Five main topics were examined in this work: the word of God and the Divine will; letter speculations; the idea of walāya, "friendship with God", and the figure of the awliya', "the friends of God"; the concept of the perfect man; and the notion of parallel worlds. In all five topics, noteworthy similarities were found between medieval Isma'ili literature and the writings of the Andalusī Sunni mystics Ibn Masarra (269/883-319/931) and Ibn al-'Arabi (560/1165-638/1240).

These similarities become particularly evident when one compares classical Sufi works, composed in the central and eastern parts of the Islamic world prior to the rise of al-Shaykh al-akbar, to the writings of Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-'Arabi. The teachings of the latter two embody a type of mystical discourse that can be characterized as theosophical. This discourse, focused on the tripartite relationship between

God, the universe and man, is permeated with cosmogonic and cosmological speculations. Letters, in both their mythical-anthropomorphic and philosophical dimensions, occupy a central place in the discussions of Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-`Arabi, as does the notion of parallel worlds. Notably in Ibn al-`Arabi's oeuvre, the idea of waláya and the figure of the awallya' constitute the main axis around which his thought revolves, and although these themes are indeed present in eastern Sufi literature, they are treated by Ibn al-`Arabi in an unprecedented manner and are comprehensively conceptualized and theorized. Above all, it is Neoplatonic philosophy, in its unique form which is common to both the longer version of the Theology of Aristotle and Isma'ili Neoplatonism, that dictates much of the terminology and ideas in the writings of Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-`Arabi. The combination of all these various traits is, by and large, lacking in classical Sufi compilations, or, for that matter, in Shi`i-Twelve works predating the writings of later authors such as Haydar Amuli. On the other hand, these traits are all found in Isma'ili literature.

The links and affinities between the Isma'ili tradition and the thought of Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-`Arabi are thus undeniable. However, their precise historical meaning is a matter of interpretation, and, most likely, of future dispute. Various scholars may indeed choose different ways of explaining the similarities between Isma'ili literature and the writings of Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-`Arabi. More specifically, two main historical explanations are plausible in this context:

Isma'ili thought, on the one hand, and the teachings of Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-`Arabi, on the other, are best perceived as two parallel lines in the history of Islamic mysticism. Both derive from common sources—the pre-Islamic heritage (including the Gnostic and Hermetic traditions, as well as Hellenistic and Late-Antique Neoplatonism), the Quran and Hadith, Arabic theology and philosophy and so on. Although one may speak of mutual influences between the Shi`i-Isma'ili tradition and Sunni mysticism in different points of time and in certain historical junctures, as a rule, the Isma'ili authors and the Andalus-Sunni mystics referred to here represent distinct branches in the world of Islamic mysticism, stemming from the same, common roots. The Ismaili tradition played a significant role in the formation of the intellectual world from which both Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-`Arabi emerged. Despite the fact that these two authors were doubtlessly influenced by other, diverse sources—such as the Quran and Hadith, Arabic theology and philosophy, and, in the case of Ibn al-`Arabi, by Sufism as well—the Isma'ili tradition helped shape the unique intellectual climate in North Africa and Andalus from which Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-`Arabi derived.

As stated above, both approaches are plausible, and modern scholarship in the field of Islamic mysticism will only benefit from scholarly attempts to substantiate either of the two. As is clear by now to the reader, I favor the second approach—the one which points to the significant role of the Isma'ili tradition in the development of mystical-philosophical thought in medieval Andalus. In my opinion, this approach is corroborated by various historical facts which are often ignored by scholars who study the works of Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-`Arabi. To begin with, the chronological-geopolitical framework in which Ibn Masarra, Ibn al-`Arabi and the Isma'ili Fatimis operated makes it quite difficult to accept or favor the first approach mentioned above. Why did these two unique currents in Islamic mysticism—that is, Isma'ili thought and the teachings of Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-`Arabi—develop and crystallize in the western part of the Islamic world, in North Africa and Andalus, between the 10th and the 12th centuries? Why did such a bold and revolutionary thinker like Ibn al-`Arabi emerge in Andalus of all places? And why was it that Neoplatonism, combined with a theosophical outlook and occult tendencies, found its expression in the writings of Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-`Arabi rather than in eastern Sufi

compilations? It seems to me that the presence of the Fat<sup>^</sup>mi-Isma'ili Empire in North Africa during the 10th—12th centuries suggests that rather than being a product of sheer coincidence, the similarities between Isma'ili literature and the works of Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-'Arabi are the result of specific historical and geopolitical circumstances.

Moreover, evidence from the Jewish intellectual world that evolved in North Africa and Andalus during the 10th—12th centuries—the influence of Rasa'<sup>^</sup>I <sup>^</sup>khwan al-safa' ("The Epistles of the Sincere Brethren") on Jewish Andalus authors; the figure of Isaac Israeli, his activity in Fatimi Qayrawan and the tripartite relation between his thought, the longer version of the Theology of Aristotle and Isma'ili Neoplatonism; the presence of Shi`i-Isma'ili conceptions and terminology in Judah Ha-Levi's work; and more—this evidence confirms the hypothesis presented here, namely, that the Isma'ili tradition, among other sources, contributed to the formation of mystical-philosophical thought in North Africa and Andalus from the 10th century onwards. Under the political rule and religious aegis of the Fatimi Empire, the Isma'ili milieu in North Africa functioned as a channel through which various ideas and concepts, ultimately originating in the Neoplatonic, Pythagorean/Neopythagorean, Hermetic and Gnostic traditions, passed into al-Andalus. Yet the Ismailis did not function merely as transmitters of this pre-Islamic, mystical-philosophical, esoteric and occult knowledge; they skillfully adapted it to their own Shi<sup>^</sup> Isma'ili worldview. It is this unique product that exercised its influence on North African and Andalus thought.

Tracing the intellectual history and the political fortunes of medieval Isma'ilism is thus important, perhaps even crucial, for understanding the emergence of figures such as Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-`Arabi. The intellectual world of the latter two is quite different from that of the Sufi mystics in the east. This difference is mainly evident in the way in which the mystic views reality and the relationship between God, the universe and man, and, accordingly, it is manifested in the form of his writing, in the very nature of his discourse. This discourse, with its Neoplatonic, mystical-philosophical and theosophical colorings, is what sets Ibn Masarra, Ibn al-`Arabi and the Isma'ili authors apart from eastern Sufi writers.

It is important to emphasize once again that the conclusions reached here regarding the affinities between the Isma'ili tradition and Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-`Arabi by no means imply that the latter two were Isma'ilis or Shi`is in any ways. Nowhere in their writings can one find an expression of the most essential and fundamental tenet of the Shi<sup>^</sup>-Isma'ili belief—the recognition of `Ali b. Abi Talib and his descendants, the imams, as the sole legitimate leaders of the Islamic community. If one may speak of an Isma'ili impact on the intellectual world from which Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-`Arabi emerged, it is only in the nature of their mystical-philosophical discourse. Furthermore, in my eyes, Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-`Arabi should be viewed as having successfully faced the Shi`i and the Fatimi-Isma'ili challenge to the Sunni tradition. Rather than simply adopting or plagiarizing concepts that ultimately originated in the Shi`i-Isma'ili world, Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-`Arabi adapted these concepts to their Sunni heritage, incorporating them into their own original teachings. Whether or not Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-`Arabi were aware of the Shi`i-Isma'ili provenance of various ideas and terms which they employed in their writings is a question that cannot be given a simple answer. Each case must be judged on its own.

Although this study has focused on the common traits that link Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-'Arabi to the Ismaili authors, the profound differences between their distinct worldviews and their originality should not be overlooked. Essential differences are likewise found between Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-`Arabi themselves, and perhaps it is not superfluous to reiterate here that the Isma'ili world was also

comprised of diverse and often rival factions. These factions, as I have mentioned earlier on in this study, differed on important doctrinal issues.

Finally, one should bear in mind that the Isma'ili tradition is but one source among many that helped shape the intellectual world of Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-'Arabi. The latter in particular may be viewed as having integrated into his thought many different traditions which originated in a variety of sources. These sources—be they Sufi or Shi'i-Isma'ili, theological or philosophical—should all be given their due attention by scholars.

### Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa'

As stated in the Introduction, "The Epistles of the Sincere Brethren" had a profound impact on the mystical-philosophical thought in medieval Andalus. Many themes which are found in these Epistles—the Divine creative word in its Neoplatonic context; the hierarchal view of human society and of the universe at large; the figure of the perfect man; the notion of parallel worlds; or the perception of man and the cosmos as Divine books—resurface in the writings of both Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-'Arabi, and thus point to the close affinity between these various authors. In fact, it is likely that Ibn al-'Arabi himself read the Ikhwan's Rasa'il; an indication of this may be found in the blessing "may Allah support you" (ayyadaka l^h) or in similar formulas derived from the Arabic root a.y.d., which are scattered throughout Ibn al-'Arabi's writings and which seem to originate in the Epistles of the Ikhwan. Alternatively, it is possible that Ibn al-'Arabi became acquainted with Ikhwanian ideas and terminology through other, mediating sources, for example, through Kitab al-dawar'ir al-wahmiyya ("The Book of Imaginary Circles", known as Kitah al-hada'^q, "The Book of the Gardens") by the Andalus author Ibn al-Sid al-Batalyawsi (444/4052-521/1127). Unfortunately, the Ikhwan's Epistles are the only Isma'ili text known to have directly influenced the intellectual scene in Andalus. Andalus authors would have otherwise been exposed to Isma'ili concepts either orally or by reading other texts of an Isma'ili provenance which may have circulated in Andalus or in North Africa. This, however, must remain a matter of speculation, at least for the time being.

What was the 'secret' of the Ikhwan's success in Andalus? Why were their Epistles so influential among Jewish and Muslim authors alike? As I have explained above, the Ikhwan interpreted their own Shi'i-Isma'ili heritage in a humanistic-universal way. This humanistic-universal interpretation facilitated the reception of various Shi'i Isma'ili ideas in Andalus. Moreover, contrary to the prevailing misconception in modern scholarship, the Epistles of Ikhwan al-Safa' are not an 'encyclopedia'. Rather than simply offering the reader of their Epistles scientific-philosophical knowledge, the main goal of the Ikhwan is to provide the believer with the necessary means of achieving salvation, that is, by pursuing their intellectual, spiritual, ascetical and mystical path. The knowledge which the Ikhwan reveal to their reader is not merely scientific and philosophical, but is also religious, salvational and esoteric, often dealing with occult matters such as astrology, magic and alchemy, all in the framework of Neoplatonism. It is this combination of mystical philosophy and esoteric-occult tendencies, originating in the Neoplatonic, Hermetic and Pythagorean/ Neopythagorean traditions, that attracted the intellectual and spiritual attention of many Andalus scholars, both Muslim and Jewish.

Nevertheless, the Ismaili contribution to the intellectual world of Andalus should not be restricted to Rasa'il ikhwan al-safa'. First, the thought of the Ikhwan cannot be detached from its Isma'ili background, as is clear from this work and other studies as well. Second, it is evident that various Isma'ili teachings,

other than those of the Ikhwan, likewise played their role in the formation of the mystical-philosophical thought in medieval North Africa and Andalus. Such is the conclusion one reaches when analyzing the subject of letter speculations: with one exception, the Epistles of the Ikhwan do not contain any letter speculations of the mythical-anthropomorphic and Neoplatonic kind that are so central to the thought of Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-`Arabi. Such speculations, however, are indeed found in other Isma'ili works, such as the 10th century North-African the writings of al-Ra'zi and al-Sijistani.

One last issue which deserves our attention here is the chronological problems related to the links between Ibn Masarra and the Ikhwan. In line with several previous studies,<sup>19</sup> this work has demonstrated the close affinity between Ibn Masarra's teachings and the thought of the Ikhwan. However, Ibn Masarra died in the year 931, whereas, according to most modern scholars, the Epistles were composed sometime during the second half of the 10th century. Stroumsa and Sviri have suggested that Ibn Masarra may have derived his teachings from an intellectual-mystical milieu that was similar or even identical to the one that gave rise to the Ikhwan. Another possible solution to this chronological problem would be to establish an earlier date—as some scholars have proposed—for the compilation of the Brethren's Epistles or at least parts of them, i.e. the first three decades of the 10th century. This is the solution I favor. Several factors—the similarities between Ibn Masarra and the Ikhwan; the convincing arguments of Maribel Fierro regarding the early dating of Ghayat al-hakim and Rutbat al-hakim and the latter's relation to the Ikhwan's Epistles; and the links between the Rasa'il and the Jabirian corpus, which was composed during the second half of the 9th century and the first half of the 10th century—these factors indicate, in my opinion, that the Rasa'il were compiled at an earlier date than is commonly assumed. I will add that the Isma'ilis in North Africa seem to have taken an interest in Neoplatonic philosophy long before its official adoption by the Fatimi Caliph-imam al-`Aziz in the third quarter of the 10th century. It is possible that Ibn Masarra became acquainted with Neoplatonic texts—perhaps even with the Epistles of the Ikhwan, or several of these Epistles—during his stay in Qayrawan, in the course of his visit to Mecca or maybe even after his return to al-Andalus. At any rate, the difficulties pertaining to the dating of Rasa'il ikhwan al-safa are far from being resolved at this point in time. It is clear, though, that any future discussion of this matter will have to take into account the links between Ibn Masarra and the Ikhwan.

The fact that in various aspects both Isma'ili authors and Andalusí writers such as Ibn Masarra and Ibn al-`Arabi represent a type of mysticism that is different from the classical, eastern Sufi type testifies to the richness and diversity of medieval Islamic mysticism. Crude typologies and simplistic definitions of Islamic mysticism, hitherto prevalent in modern scholarship, should be abandoned in favor of a more sophisticated approach. Islamic mysticism does not amount to Sufism alone. Furthermore, as previously noted by scholars such as Henry Corbin and Amir-Moezzi, the Shi'i and Isma'ili traditions should be regarded as playing a central role in the development of Islamic esotericism and mysticism, not only in the later middle ages, but also—and perhaps more significantly so—in the formative periods of Islamic culture. <>



## **A MONUMENT TO MEDIEVAL SYRIAN BOOK CULTURE: THE LIBRARY OF IBN ‘ABD AL-HĀDĪ** by Konrad Hirschler [Edinburgh Studies in Classical Islamic History and Culture, Edinburgh University Press, 9781474451567]

- Shortlisted for the 2020 British-Kuwait Friendship Society Book Prize in Middle Eastern Studies
- Honorable Mention at the 2021 MELA Book Awards
- Reassembles the books of a medieval Arabic library that are today dispersed around the world
- Sets out a new approach to the study of Arabic book culture
- Edits the most important Arabic medieval book list
- Provides a new angle on the history of ḥadīth in the late-medieval period
- Reconceptualises the mobility of endowed books
- Reproduces the entire catalogue in colour

In the late medieval period, manuscripts galore circulated in Middle Eastern libraries. Yet very few book collections have come down to us as such or have left a documentary trail. This book discusses the largest private book collection of the pre-Ottoman Arabic Middle East for which we have both a paper trail and a surviving corpus of the manuscripts that once sat on its shelves: the Ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī Library of Damascus. The book suggests that this library was part of the owner’s symbolic strategy to monumentalise a vanishing world of scholarship bound to his life, family, quarter and home city.

### Reviews

Hirschler’s book is an excellent and extremely insightful reminder of how much these centuries-old monuments still influence our scholarly present.

Two sets of plates (one documenting Ibn ‘Abd al-Hadi’s innovations and the second a facsimile of the original manuscript), a bibliography, a general index, and indices of titles and authors round out what can only be described as a book monument to a monument of books and will be of special interest to those interested in the history of books and libraries. – Hirschler, Konrad - Edinburgh University, *A Monument to Medieval Syrian Book Culture: The Library of Ibn ‘Abd al-Hadi*

Hirschler’s **MONUMENT TO MEDIEVAL SYRIAN BOOK CULTURE** demonstrates exceptionally well how rich and revealing at first sight dull traces from the past – in this case, a late-15th century list of books – are, at least if approached with the kind of methodological and heuristic creativity and rigour that have become a hallmark of Hirschler’s scholarship.

Hirschler develops a carefully and innovatively constructed argument about how complex realities and meanings of intellectual, library and book practices in late medieval Damascus inform at the same time about highly localised phenomena and about their much wider value to understand transformations across time and space. This book is therefore not only a much needed contribution to current understandings of the social and intellectual milieus of late medieval Damascus. It is itself a monument to how a turn to combining history and material philology is substantially refining, and changing, modern imaginations of Middle Eastern and Islamic history in general. – Jo Van Steenbergen, *Ghent University*

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## **THE LATIN QUR'AN, 1143–1500: TRANSLATION, TRANSITION, INTERPRETATION** edited by: Cándida Ferrero Hernández and John Tolan [The European Qur'an, De Guyter, ISBN 9783110702637]

In 1143 Robert of Ketton produced the first Latin translation of the Qur'an. This translation, extant in 24 manuscripts, was one of the main ways in which Latin European readers had access to the Muslim holy book. Yet it was not the only means of transmission of Quranic stories and concepts to the Latin world: there were other medieval translations into Latin of the Qur'an and of Christian polemical texts composed in Arabic which transmitted elements of the Qur'an (often in a polemical mode).

The essays in this volume examine the range of medieval Latin transmission of the Qur'an and reaction to the Qur'an by concentrating on the manuscript traditions of medieval Qur'an translations and anti-Islamic polemics in Latin. We see how the Arabic text was transmitted and studied in Medieval Europe. We examine the strategies of translators who struggled to find a proper vocabulary and syntax to render Quranic terms into Latin, at times showing miscomprehensions of the text or willful distortions for polemical purposes. These translations and interpretations by Latin authors working primarily in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Spain were the main sources of information about Islam for European scholars until well into the sixteenth century, when they were printed, reused and commented. This volume presents a key assessment of a crucial chapter in European understandings of Islam.

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### Robert of Ketton's Translation and its Legacy

“Lex Mahumet pseudoprophete, que arabice Alchoran, id est, collectio preceptorum uocatur”, “The law of the false prophet Muhammad, which in Arabic is called the Qur’an, which means collection of precepts.” This is the title that the scribe of the earliest extant manuscript (Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal MS 1162) gave to Robert of Ketton’s Latin translation of the Qur’an. The title crystal-izes some of the principal ways in which European Christian intellectuals, from the twelfth century forward, understood the Qur’an and Islam. The Qur’an is first and foremost a *lex*, a word which in twelfth-century Latin means both law and religion. European jurists and theologians understood human history as being marked by a succession of legal configurations. From the time of Adam to that of Moses was the period before the law (*ante legem*), ruled by natural law. From the revelation of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai to the birth of Christ was the period under the law (*sub lege*). Finally, Christ came and initiated the period under grace (*sub gratia*), proclaiming “Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” (Mt 5:17). These three periods were associated with three types of law: natural law (*lex naturalis*), Mosaic law (*lex Moysis*, codified in the Old Testament), and Christian Law (*lex Christi*, grounded in the New Testament). Confronted with another *lex*, that of Muhammad (or of “the Saracens”, as it is often called *lex Sarracenorum*), Medieval European intellectuals tried to understand how it might fit into this schema. The Qur’an, according to this title, is the law of a false prophet. Whereas Moses received the Law from God on Mount Sinai and Christ, God’s word incarnate, fulfilled and transformed the law, Muhammad’s law by contrast is illegitimate. The de-legitimizing of the Muslim prophet plays a central role in Christian responses to Islam, as the various works that accompany Ketton’s Qur’an in the *corpus cluniacense* make clear. Whereas for Muslims the Qur’an is the word of God, for Ketton as for other Latin Christian authors it is merely a “collection of precepts” of a false prophet. Muhammad, for Ketton and for those who will read his translation, is the sole author of this *lex*, an illegitimate law based on feigned revelations. The choice of the term “collection” also emphasizes the human origins of this law, the hand of the false prophet who gathered diverse “precepts” into a single volume. Robert of Ketton’s translation, as

we have seen in these pages, represents the first comprehensive attempt by Latin Christians to understand and confront the Qur'an. Or rather, Robert's translation is the most important part of the collective effort of the translators that Peter of Cluny hired to produce the corpus cluniacense. This is why Mercedes Garcia Arenal, Jan Loop, Roberto Tottoli and I decided to make this translation the starting point for our collective research project, "The European Qur'an", which is studying the history of the Muslim holy book in European culture from the twelfth century to the early nineteenth.<sup>2</sup> Cándida Ferrero Hernández and I organized a conference on Ketton's translation at the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona in March, 2020. This book is the result of that rich and stimulating conference. For years, José Martínez Gázquez, Cándida Ferrero Hernández and their colleagues (many of whom contributed to this volume) have been conducting research on the translation and study of the Qur'an in Latin in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, through their joint research endeavor, "Islamolatina". This book is also the first book in our new series, The European Qur'an, with De Gruyter. It allows us a first look at what we mean by "The European Qur'an", the place of the Muslim holy book in European cultural history. An important part of this tradition of the European Qur'an is the transmission and study of the Arabic text. Xavier Casassas' study of the glosses of the Arabic Bellus Qur'an manuscript provides a fascinating example of the study of the Qur'an in 16th century Spain: we see how the readers who annotated the manuscript studied the Arabic text, attempted to understand it, and consulted Muslim exegesis (tafsir) to help them do so. Juan Pablo Arias' study of the particularities of the Qur'an as preserved in the Maghreb and Al-Andalus underlines the attention we need to pay to the possible versions/ variations in the Qur'anic texts that European Christians encountered; we cannot assume that they had access to a text equivalent to that of the 1924 Cairo edition. Robert of Ketton's translation is of course at the center of our preoccupations in this volume. Roberto Tottoli and Reinhold Gleis have published a book on "Marracci at work".

Conclusion: Robert of Ketton's Translation and its Legacy rubric "Ketton at work".

Olivier Hanne's close comparative study of the translation methods and strategies of Robert and of Adelard of Bath show how each of these twelfth-century translators

sought to comprehend the texts and to adopt their translation methods to the specificities of the texts and of the intended readership. Reinhold Gleib explores the problems of trying to produce a “literal” or “word-by-word” translation of the Qur’an in Latin and the choices that Robert of Ketton makes in trying to render the sometimes quite foreign concepts of the Qur’an into comprehensible Latin. Ketton’s text cannot be understood without taking into account the manuscripts in which it was known, and in particular the rich and complex set of glosses. We await the coming edition of the translation by José Martínez Gázquez and Fernando González Muñoz. Oscar de la Cruz examines several examples of glosses showing hostile readings of the Qur’an, involving *res turpissima* (sodomy) and the use of *velamen* (veil): in these cases Qur’anic words are given specific Latin significations that facilitate their polemical use. Inevitably, we often came back to Arsenal MS 1162, which Marie Thérèse d’Alverny had recognized as the source manuscript of the corpus cluniacense. Anthony Lappin’s careful study, notably focusing on Peter of Cluny’s letter to Bernard of Clairvaux, shows how the corpus is to be understood first as part of Peter’s rhetorical defense of Cluny against a formidable spiritual and institutional adversary. When it is no longer necessary to defend the Cluniacs against the Cistercians, the corpus falls into relative neglect (reflected in the state of the manuscript), only to be revived later. Fernando González’s meticulous study of the deleted and corrected passages in the Arsenal manuscript confirms that it was a working copy, original of collection, but not of any of the constitutive texts. Florence Ninette’s work dovetails nicely with that of Lappin and González. Her close study of Vincent of Beauvais’ use of the Latin *Risālat alKindī* shows that Vincent had access to a more complete version than the one in the Arsenal manuscript (and the other manuscripts of the corpus cluniacense), which confirms that this pre-Arsenal version of *Risālat alKindī* circulated independently (and was sent by Peter of Cluny to Bernard of Clairvaux.) While Ketton’s translation has been the focus of many of the articles in this volume, others have examined other medieval translations. Tom Burman looked at one early and previously overlooked text that transmitted Qur’anic citations to the Latin world: the *Epistola Leonis imperatoris ad Umar*, a ninth-century Latin translation of the famous apocryphal

correspondence between the Byzantine emperor and the second Caliph. Mark of Toledo's thirteenth-century translation of the Qur'an was less known than Robert's but clearly appreciated by some, notably Riccoldo da Monte di Croce because it is more closely follows the Arab text, as Davide Scotto demonstrates. Nadia Petrus' study of the manuscript traditions of Ketton and Mark highlights the very different contexts of the two translations: Mark's was a stand-alone text, making it more difficult for those who did not have access to other information about Islam, while Robert's, in the vast majority of manuscripts, was part of a corpus. Alexis Rivera brings the tools of translation studies to bear on the comparison of the translations of Robert, Mark and Egidio da Viterbo, showing how Robert presents an overt translation (one that acknowledges its nature as an interpretation) while Mark and Egidio are covert translations (translations posing as the equivalent of the original). Mouhamad Khaly Wélé's comparative study of the translations of Robert of Ketton and George Sale shows how each was dependent on tafsir and how Ketton chose those elements of Muslim exegesis which reinforced his polemical view of Islam (for example, that when Egyptian women saw the handsome young Joseph, they were so struck by his beauty that they menstruated). Sale, on the contrary, chooses those elements of Muslim tradition that confirm his Enlightenment view of Islam as a rational, pure form of monotheism. Knowledge of Qur'an came also through other works in the corpus cluniacense, in particular the *Risālat alKindī*, in which passages from the Qur'an are presented with polemical arguments ready to be deployed against a hypothetical Muslim adversary – or, more probably, to reassure the Christian reader of the superiority of Christianity. The *Risālat alKindī*, is hence much easier to use for a compiler like Vincent of Beauvais than Ketton's Qur'an (and, as Florence Ninitte has shown, Vincent probably had a manuscript of the *Risāla* independent of the corpus cluniacense). Some chose not to use Robert's Qur'an, including his friend and colleague Hermann of Carinthia, in the *Liber de Doctrina Mahumeti* which comprised part of the corpus, as Ulisse Cecini has shown. One of the major Latin authors to grapple with the Qur'an was Dominican Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, who read the Arabic text and was familiar with and Mark's translation. As Davide Scotto shows, Riccoldo approached the Qur'an through study of the Arab text

alongside Latin texts and earlier anti-Qur'anic polemics. He tried to use the Qur'an to help understand Christian soteriological history. Why had God allowed the Saracens' successes? Why hadn't those who tried to oppose it (Francis of Assisi, Louis IX and others) succeeded? Despite his long residence in Baghdad, his knowledge of Arabic and of the Arabic Qur'an, Riccoldo was dependent on Mark's translation and on the material in the corpus cluniacense. Riccoldo's *Contra legem sarracenorum* became an extremely important source of information about the Qur'an and Islam for European readers, as Cándida Ferrero's article makes clear: there were numerous Latin manuscripts, early printed editions: these included the *Improbatio Alcorani*, published by Antonio de la Peña in 1500 and in Bibliander's volume of 1543, in which Riccoldo's text is published alongside Ketton's translation and the other works of the corpus cluniacense. There were also vernacular translations of Riccoldo's anti-Qur'anic tract: an anonymous Castilian translation was published in Seville as 1501 as *la Reprobación del Alcorán* (& in Toledo in 1502); Martin Luther published his own German translation of Riccoldo's polemic in 1542. Robert of Ketton's Latin translation became a key tool for European intellectuals to understand and describe Islam. Many of them used Ketton's text and the glosses which accompanied it to reinforce a negative portrayal of Islam and Muslims. As Augustín Justicia Lara shows, Franciscan friar Symon Semeonis, in the *Itinerarium* describing his pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1323, uses his reading of Robert's Qur'an to offer authoritative citations to describe the Muslim societies in which he travels (their religious practices, veiling of women, prohibition of alcohol). Robert's translation and the glosses permit him to understand, explain and denigrate the society he describes. Giacomo della Marca (1391–1476) used Ketton's translation as a tool for missionary activity in the Balkans, as José Martínez shows. Martínez provides a critical edition of Giacomo's *Extracta ex Alcorano ad confutationem Sarracenorum* (in appendix to his article) and shows how he worked Qur'anic material into his sermons. The years from 1451 to 1461 saw a significant number of texts about Islam and the "Turkish menace" as, in reaction to the Ottoman siege and capture (in 1453) of Constantinople, European Christians debated the merits of crusade and mission; a number of these texts were written by ecclesiastics who had met at the Church



councils of Basel (1432) and Ferrara/Florence (1437). Jacob Langeloh's chapter on John of Ragusa and the manuscripts brought to the council of Basel provides an introduction to a key event in the intellectual encounter between Islam and Latin Europe in the fifteenth century. One of those present at the Council of Basel was Jean Germain, bishop of Châlon sur Saône, the object of Irene Reginato's article. She looks at how this intellectual and proponent of crusade understood the Qur'an and deployed it in his polemics against Islam. Jean did not mention Robert's translation; it is not clear whether he had seen it or read it in Basel. He had an indirect access to the Qur'an, via the Latin translation of the *Risālat alKindī* and via Petrus Alfonsi twelfth-century *Dialogi contra Iudeos* (which was based largely on Arabic text of the *Risālat alKindī*). Jean Germain's additions and alterations, deliberate or not, show his Christian point of view: for example, he systematically portrays Muhammad as the author of the Qur'an. Indeed, in these pages we have seen a number of examples of the old adage: *trahit ad se*. Translators and glossators and commentators tried to make the Qur'an and Islam comprehensible to their Latin Christian audience, to incorporate the Qur'an into their own Christian world views. Antoni Biosca's close study of scribal errors in various polemical manuscripts shows how these scribes tend to replace the strange with the familiar. Kasia Starczewska shows how glosses concerning Dhul-Qarnayn ("the one of two horns" in sura 18) were incorporated into pre-existing ideas of the history of Alexander the Great and of Gog and Magog. Over and against the polemical impulse to refute or reject the Qur'anic narrative is the desire to understand it by incorporating it into the web of historical knowledge based on a mixture of Greek and Latin historiography and biblical narrative. As Cándida Ferrero Hernández explains in her introduction to this volume, we chose to give an end-date of 1500 to the scope of this volume. We wished to stop before Bibliander's 1543 edition, when Robert's 400-year old translation is given a second life. Bibliander's volume, and the tremendous impact that it gave to Robert's translation for the following centuries, is worth a study of its own. What we have traced in these pages is only the beginning of the story of the European Qur'an, a subject that the "EuQu" team of scholars will be studying over the coming years. We are organizing conferences and workshops across Europe and beyond, our

“European Qur’an” database will soon be online, and other volumes in our “European Qur’an” series with De Gruyter will be published in the coming years. Readers can keep up on the progress of our [Website](#).

## **THE IBERIAN QUR’AN: FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO MODERN TIMES** edited by: Mercedes García-Arenal and Gerard Wieggers [The European Qur'an, De Gruyter, ISBN 9783110778595]

Due to the long presence of Muslims in Islamic territories (Al-Andalus and Granada) and of Muslims minorities in the Christians parts, the Iberian Peninsula provides a fertile soil for the study of the Qur’an and Qur’an translations made by both Muslims and Christians. From the mid-twelfth century to at least the end of the seventeenth, the efforts undertaken by Christian scholars and churchmen, by converts, by Muslims (both Mudejars and Moriscos) to transmit, interpret and translate the Holy Book are of the utmost importance for the understanding of Islam in Europe.

This book reflects on a context where Arabic books and Arabic speakers who were familiar with the Qur’an and its exegesis coexisted with Christian scholars. The latter not only intended to convert Muslims, and polemize with them but also to acquire solid knowledge about them and about Islam. Qur’ans were seized during battle, bought, copied, translated, transmitted, recited, and studied. The different features and uses of the Qur’an on Iberian soil, its circulation as well as the lives and works of those who wrote about it and the responses of their audiences, are the object of this book.

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## The Iberian Qur'an and the Qur'an in Iberia: A Survey by Mercedes Garcia-Arenal and Gerard A. Wieggers

Due to the long presence of Muslims in Iberia, both as inhabitants of the Islamic territories (al-Andalus and the Nasrid Kingdom of Granada) and as Muslim minorities in the Christian Kingdoms, the Iberian Peninsula provides fertile soil for the study of the cultural history of the Qur'an in Europe, the focus precisely of the EuQu project to which this book belongs. This book focuses on Christian Iberia. From the mid-twelfth to at least the end of the seventeenth century, the efforts undertaken by Muslim religious scholars and copyists on the one hand, and Christian scholars and converts to Christianity on the other, to copy, transmit, interpret and translate the Qur'an are of the utmost importance for understanding the significance of the Qur'an in Europe. But this book goes beyond the Early Modern period, exploring the significance and knowledge of the Qur'an in Iberia in Modern times and also in other Hispanic territories, demonstrating the long engagement with the Muslim Holy Scripture well after the times in which Muslim minorities inhabited the Peninsula.

As a result of the long process known as "Reconquest", the Northern Spanish kingdoms, slowly expanding their frontiers southwards throughout the Middle Ages, came to contain large minorities of Muslims, the so-called Mudejars (from Arabic *mudajjan*, i.e., he who has concluded a treaty after the surrender of his village or city), who were allowed, under certain conditions, to preserve and practice their faith. It was the first time in history that significant numbers of Muslims came to live under non-Muslim rule. There were other minorities, the Mozarabs or Arabized Christians, who lived in Muslim lands and remained as a distinct Arabized minority when they emigrated to Christian territory. Muslims (named Mudejars before the orders of conversion) and Moriscos (converted Muslims) interpreted and translated their sacred scripture for their own use as they were becoming increasingly at home in the Romance vernacular and losing the knowledge of Arabic.' There were translations from Arabic to

vernacular Castilian or Aragonese, written in the Latin alphabet or more frequently in what is called "Aljamiado", i. e., Romance vernacular in Arabic script. The first written evidence of such translations appears in Aragon dated in 1415.

A decade after the rendition of the capital city of Granada and conquest of the Nasrid Kingdom, the so-called Catholic Monarchs, Fernando and Isabel, decreed in 1502 the expulsion (to be avoided only by conversion) of the entire Muslim population of the territories belonging to the Crown of Castile. In the Crown of Aragon the Muslim population would be allowed to practice Islam until 1526, when they too were forced to convert to Christianity or face expulsion. The existence of numerous and firmly established Muslim communities in the Crown of Aragon (including Valencia) that were free to practice their faith from the eleventh to the early sixteenth centuries explains the fact that most of the translations and commentaries of the Qur'an were written and copied in the Aragonese territories, where Christian and Muslim communities had lived side by side for centuries and used a common language to communicate with one another. In Castile, the situation was different. Muslims were a much smaller part of the population, about 3%, against 30% in Aragon and Valencia. Christian Aragonese or Catalan scholars and clerics (from the famous examples of Ramon Marti and Ramon Llull up to Juan Andres and Joan Marti de Figuerola) had easier access to Arabic or Islamic works than other European scholars interested in studying the Qur'an, and they had much greater opportunities to engage Muslim or formerly Muslim collaborators to help them study it than they would have had elsewhere in Europe. As far as is known, the earliest Romance Qur'an translation (now lost) was made from Latin into Catalan in 1382 at the behest of King Pere III el Ceremonies (Peter IV of Aragon, d. 1387).

In Castile the period of collaboration between Christian scholars and Muslims was shorter. But we do have the famous example of the translation of the Qur'an made by Juan de Segovia in 1456 with the cooperation of the faqih and mufti Isa ibn Jabir, a Mudejar, not a convert, who died in Tunis and was buried there. This translation has not been found. The only complete translation of a Morisco Qur'an that has reached us, known as "El Coran de Toledo" was copied in 1606; one of its colophons is shown on the cover of this book.

Forced conversion of Muslims to Christianity was completed by the 1520s; those who wanted to remain Muslim had to practice their religion in clandestinity and, from the 1530s onwards, under persecution by the Inquisition. By the end of the sixteenth century, Arabic was still spoken and written in parts of Spain (mainly Granada, Extremadura, Valencia and areas of Aragon) by this population of Islamic origin. Inquisition files contain highly detailed information on the use of Arabic until the expulsion of 1609. And that was so in spite of the fact that Felipe II, by means of a decree in 1567 in the Kingdom of Granada, had forbidden the oral and written use of the Arabic language. This final prohibition of Arabic in 1567 was the main cause of the Morisco revolt of the former Kingdom of Granada known as the War of the Alpujarras, a fierce and devastating two-year war. In effect it required a new Christian conquest of the kingdom, and its aftermath was the expulsion of the Granadan Morisco population to the Northern territories of Castile (1570 —71).

This is the background of a long-term historical situation which makes Iberia a unique case study for the history of the translation of the Qur'an. On the one hand, no other area of Western Europe knew such an intense and enduring confrontation with Islam; and on the other, no other area had such a close and productive entanglement with Islam and with Muslims, to the point that arguments over Spain's Islamic past have been a fundamental element in constructing its national identity.

The religious confrontation produced polemics and disputations, but not only those, as this book will show. Rather, the term "polemics" covers a complex field of intellectual and religious activity in which the aims of knowing and confuting Islamic doctrine were intertwined and not only directed to Muslims, but also to Christians with the aim of separating clearly what was Christian and what was not.<sup>4</sup> Translation of the Qur'an for Christians was a tool to convert Muslims; for Muslims it was a protection from being converted, from losing oneself in a Christian majority.

In this book we have intended to consider all facets of the cultural and religious significance of the Qur'an on Iberian Christian soil: copies of the Qur'an, translations, dissemination by way of teaching, interpretation and preaching, circulation, collection made by both Christians and Muslims. The contributors to the present volume reflect on a context where Arabic books and Arabic speakers who were familiar with the Qur'an and its exegesis coexisted with Christian populations, often sharing the same spaces, with Christian scholars and the centres of power and (religious) education. In Christian Iberia, the close proximity of Islamic tradition and sources, and the "availability" of informants (mostly, but not exclusively, converts), offered Christians interested in the Qur'an a privileged access to Islam. This is visible in a concept of Islam (even in anti-Islamic texts) that is much closer to the lived experience of Muslims than we find, for example, in early modern Northern European scholarship: a concept of Islam not limited to the Qur'an, but also more aware of the religious significance of tafsir (exegesis), and hadith (tradition) than in other parts of Europe, where that awareness was almost absent in this period. The collaboration and contacts between the two religions also produced reactions of separation and rejection on both sides; we will see these phenomena when dealing with the action of the Inquisition and the Indexes of Forbidden Books, or the fatwas issued to restrain Muslims from providing Qur'ans and tafsir to the Christians as well as helping them to understand their Holy Text. Both communities were engaged in drawing clear boundaries between them. But in this process the power relations between the different groups played a major role. Interesting in this regard are the continuous relations between Muslims in the Christian territories and their coreligionists in Muslim lands. Muslims from Christian territories performed the pilgrimage to Mecca and returned.<sup>5</sup> They also consulted muftis in Granada and in Cairo, and managed to obtain books from Algiers and Morocco.<sup>6</sup> We constantly see through all the phenomena and case studies analysed in this book that Iberia is a laboratory for the study of the construction, destruction, and blurring of religious, cultural and political boundaries. Finally, another important aspect of Iberia is its connection with Italy, which imports and then transforms this Islamic knowledge for Italians' own humanist and philological endeavours that will nurture nascent Orientalism, as we will see with Cardinal Egidio da Viterbo, among others.

It is, we believe, one of the important aspects of this book that it considers Iberian Qur'ans as studied by both Christians and Muslims. The different features and uses of the Qur'an in Iberia, its circulation, and the lives and works of those who wrote about it and the responses of their audiences, are the object of this book.

The first part of the book is dedicated to Iberian translations of the Qur'an into Latin. In it we have followed suit to the first volume of this series, *The Latin Qur'an, 1143 —1500. Translation, Transition, Interpretation*, edited by Candida Ferrero Hernandez and John Tolan. This important recent volume explains the relatively small space that Latin translations occupy in the present volume. Nevertheless, those Latin translations are of utmost importance and deserve to be briefly introduced here.

In 1142 the head of the Cluniac order, Peter the Venerable, travelled to Northern Spain, where among other things he commissioned from the astronomer and mathematician Robert of Ketton a complete translation of the Qur'an. Therefore the first translation of the Qur'an into Latin was made somewhere in the Ebro valley in 1143, half a century after the conquest of Toledo (1085) and after Pope Urban II had launched the first Crusade (1095). A Muslim was involved in it as well, whom we know only by his name, Muhammad. A second translation was carried out in Toledo in 1210 at the time of the emergence of the Mendicant orders (Franciscans and Dominicans) in Italy and Spain, where they established themselves as the Church missionary arm committed to the evangelisation of Jews and Muslims. It was also the time when the Castilian Kingdom was engaged in an effort to stop the Almohad expansion. This second translation was made by Mark of Toledo, canon of the Toledo cathedral and a member of the entourage of Archbishop Rodrigo Jimenez de Rada, and probably patronised by him. Those two first translations arose, according to Davide Scotto, from personal and collective convictions in regard to the Crusades—or rather, at the intersection between translation and Crusade.<sup>1</sup> Charles Burnett offers here a slightly different interpretation. His chapter, the first in the book, is dedicated to these two translations and focuses on the different norms of translation used by Robert of Ketton and Mark of Toledo—one paraphrastic, or *ad sensum*, and the other literal—in a debate that was also being carried out in connection with the translation of the Bible. Mark of Toledo's translation provides a starting point for confronting the Arabic text directly. Burnett analyses how these norms of translation were applied and what effect the results had on their readers. In so doing he demonstrates the hermeneutical sophistication of both translation processes. As he proposes, those translations reflect local concerns: mainly, the intention to persuade families who had accepted Islam or their descendants to revert to Christianity. Therefore Burnett reads these translations in the context of a mission to the Mozarabs, the Christian minority that was living in al-Andalus but also emigrating to Toledo. In the second chapter Teresa Witcombe examines how the Christian Castilians consider the Qur'an precisely in the period between the translations by Ketton and Mark of Toledo, showing that the term Qur'an (*Alchoran*) appears in Castilian chronicles only in the aftermath of Mark's translation. Before this point there are mentions of the "law" of the Muslims, as in the translation of Robert of Ketton who refers to *lex sarracenorum*, but the term Qur'an itself is not used. At the same time, the thirteenth-century chronicles from Castile contain considerably more detail about Islamic doctrine than their predecessors, and Witcombe links this fact clearly to Mark of Toledo's translation of the *Liber Alchorani* and the *Libellus* of the Almohad *mandi Ibn Tumart*. It means that the translation of Mark of Toledo had a wider diffusion, a bigger readership than has been hitherto known.

As for the very convincing proposal by Charles Burnett (and also by Teresa Witcombe) to consider the translations of both Robert of Ketton and Mark of Toledo in the context of the need to instruct Mozarabs and Christian converts to Islam, it fits with the third chapter, penned by Anthony J. Lappin and also concerned with Toledo. At that time an important minority of Arabic Christians, the Mozarabs, lived in that city as in many others in al-Andalus. The question addressed by Lappin is whether the Mozarabs had also translated the Qur'an into Latin for their own use. Using indirect evidence for the existence of a Mozarabic Latin compilation of Islamic legal material, including legal sections of the Qur'an, Lappin argues that this was the case. He also, most interestingly, establishes the contacts of the Toledan Mozarabs with Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny, who was responsible for the creation of the Corpus of texts related to Islam known as the *Corpus Cluniacense*. Lappin concurs with Burnett

and Witcombe in linking the first translations with the need to keep Mozarabs within the Christian realm.

A new, complete translation of the Qur'an into Latin was completed in 1456 by Juan de Segovia in close cooperation with a faqih of Segovia, Yca de Gebir. This translation is lost except for a few fragments in other manuscripts. We know that it was a trilingual endeavour, with parallel texts in Arabic, Castilian and Latin. Only the prologue has survived and through it we know that Juan de Segovia, a prominent theologian and participant in the council of Basel (1431—39), prepared this trilingual Qur'an in the Benedictine convent of Aiton. Davide Scotto, who has done previous important work on Segovia,<sup>9</sup> dedicates his contribution to this volume to Juan de Segovia's reports on the disputes between himself and three Muslims that took place in Medina del Campo starting in October 1431. In his accounts, written at the Aiton monastery more than twenty years after the Castilian encounters, Segovia made a number of references to the Qur'an. Scotto uses these reports to reconstruct the political and cultural context in which the disputes took place and the arguments made in those interreligious conversations. Scotto concludes that these disputes convinced Segovia of the need to have a translation of the Qur'an for his strategy of converting the Muslims peacefully —per *Warn pacis et doctrinae*, as Segovia says in his epistles. While in fact he read the Qur'an only much later, he projects his knowledge of the book back in time to those disputes in Medina del Campo.

The last contribution in this part, authored by Ulisse Cecini, presents another fascinating chapter in the story of Latin translations in the Iberian Peninsula. He deals with the one written in the El Escorial monastery by the Franciscan friar Germanus de Silesia, which was concluded, after many versions and revisions, in 1664. It is not only a Latin translation of the Qur'an but also a presentation and discussion of Islamic exegesis, in Latin translation and at times also in Arabic transcription. Cecini's essay sheds light on another aspect of the Iberian Qur'an, the connections between Rome/Italy and the Iberian Peninsula in the seventeenth century. He also discusses the work done on Arabic manuscripts at El Escorial, where Felipe II had established his Royal Library in the early 1570 (Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de El Escorial).

The second part of the book is dedicated to the Muslim production of Qur'ans in Christian Spain, mainly during the sixteenth century, both in Arabic and translated from Arabic into Romance vernaculars written in the Arabic alphabet (*Aljamiado*). It begins with a chapter by Gerard Wiegers on the responses that the office of four chief qadis of Mamluk Cairo, representing the four Sunni schools of law (*madhahib*), issued at the request of Mudejars from Aragon a decade before the forced conversion of the Aragonese Muslims to Christianity. One of the questions the Mudejars addressed to the qadis was whether or not it was legitimate to translate the Qur'an into non-Arabic languages. The responses vary according to the different approaches of the four schools, but they are all in accord about the legitimacy of vernacular *tafsirs*, that is to say that translating in the sense of commentary is approved. The fatwas seem to aim at limiting the ritual and visible use of Romance vernaculars and literal translation, but they take a non-rejective view of the possibility of Islam living in a minority position with the limitations that such a position entails. This first chapter is important for understanding the features of the translations made by Mudejars and Moriscos considered in the subsequent chapters of this section. We may assume that translations already circulated among the Mudejars well before the said fatwas were given. The last chapter of the section, by Mercedes Garcia-Arenal, draws on a wide range of Inquisition trials in which the culprit is accused of having a Qur'an, or of copying, reading, studying, memorizing, or carrying it.

Scrutiny of Inquisition material shows how widely copies of the Qur'an circulated in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain. The abundance of Qur'ans demonstrates that the Holy Book continued to be the backbone of Morisco Islam up to the years of the general Expulsion of the Moriscos (1609 —14). This is important because the Qur'ans in both Arabic and Aljamiado that have reached us are only a small corpus —many perished in the fires of the Inquisition or were taken by Moriscos into exile. Many were hidden in false floors and walls, and discovered after the expulsion and up to the nineteenth century. We also have Arabic Qur'ans copied throughout the Morisco period up to the beginning of the seventeenth century; some of them are rich and well-decorated manuscripts that reveal the patronage of wealthy Muslim families and the existence of copyists, calligraphers and illustrators, access to good paper and ink, etc. A good example of this is a Mushaf preserved in Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia, copied in 1597 by Muhammad b. Muhammad Ballester in Aranda de Moncayo.'

Therefore the first and last chapters of this section frame the Mudejar and Morisco Qur'ans as caught between Muslim and Christian legislation, both of them seriously curtailing (or trying to destroy completely, in the case of the Inquisition) the efforts of Iberian Muslims to possess, circulate, and translate the Qur'an. These efforts by Muslims —but also by Christians, as we will see in the next part of the book—were aimed at establishing distance and clear boundaries between the two religious communities, to avoid any porosity, including knowledge of the other. We will return to this aspect later on.

As this part shows, Spanish Muslim versions of the Qur'an differ greatly in the amount of exegesis that they contain. Mudejar and Morisco translations of the Qur'an often include longer or shorter passages of tafsir, or are presented chiefly in the form of tafsir: i. e., the translations are actually paraphrasing the Arabic and clearly do not intend to function as a literal, word-for-word rendering. Works of Muslim exegesis circulated among the Moriscos sometimes in compendiums of different authors of tafsir; others are transmitted in complete versions, such as the one by Ibn Abi Zamanin, translated into Romance in Arabic script (Aljamiado).

Most of the copies of Mudejar and Morisco Qur'ans that have reached us date from the sixteenth century, and constitute either a part or excerpt of the Qur'an or what is known in the scholarly literature since Eduardo Saavedra as "abridged Qur'ans". More recently, Nuria de Castilla has called the standard selection of chapters and verses "the Morisco Qur'an".<sup>1</sup> In fact, it is remarkable that there is only one complete Qur'an translated during the Mudejar-Morisco period that has reached us, the already mentioned BCLM MS 235 (known as the Toledo Qur'an), copied in 1606 in Castilian language and Latin script from a copy written in Aljamiado. We have two copies made outside the Peninsula in Salonica (Thessaloniki), where there was an important community of Iberian exiles, Moriscos and Sephardic Jews. One of the Thessaloniki Qur'ans was translated by the Aragonese Ybrahim Izquierdo in 1568; it contains an interlinear translation in Arabic and Castilian, and is held at the Bibliothèque nationale de France where it was donated by the French Orientalist Antoine Galland. The other was made by Muhamad Rabadan in 1612, also in Salonica, and is written in Aljamiado. Both are abridged or abbreviated Qur'ans, of which we have nearly thirty examples. These consisted of a selection, always the same, of the chapters and verses most recited in daily prayer, generally arranged by the length of the suras, the longest suras selected first. The chapter by Adrián Rodríguez Iglesias is dedicated to these manuscripts and their typologies. We have also another type of abridged Qur'an in Arabic, organized in reverse order, which seems to have been used for learning the book by heart. Adrián Rodríguez and



Pablo Roza Candás devote a chapter to this newly discovered reverse-order Qur'an and to the role of memory and memorizing in the religious life of Mudejars and Moriscos. The copies they study have all been found in the Aragonese village of Calanda, where, as they demonstrate, a school of copyists existed. In his other chapter Pablo Roza Candas offers an overview of dialectal and lexical variations in different Morisco translations of the Qur'an and links these variations to the sociocultural contexts in which they arose, mainly in Aragon. Considering the Qur'an of Salonica translated by Izquierdo (who was a member of a well-known Aragonese family), and analyzing its linguistic features that he also finds in Sephardic works from the same Greek locality, Roza suggests a fascinating world of relations and contacts between different Hispanic minorities in Iberia and, most importantly, in exile around the Mediterranean.

According to the contributions in this section, the typical Spanish Qur'an made by and for Iberian Muslims is found in anonymous sixteenth-century manuscripts, but these translations appear to be copies of versions made earlier. What were the originals, and who made them? When was the Qur'an first translated in Spanish? Most of these questions remain unanswered. The chapters in this section demonstrate that Mudejars and then Moriscos read, copied and preserved more than one version of the Qur'an in Spanish. The genetic or genealogical relationships that may exist among surviving versions of the Spanish Qur'an are of the utmost interest and, though scrutinized here, remain in need of further study. As for who made them, the clear protagonists of this section of the book are the so-called *alfaquies* (from Arabic *al-faqih*), important figures in their communities, respected persons with religious knowledge: the "guardians of Islam", who had preserved a tradition of Quranic learning and exegesis." The role of the *alfaquies* in the Christian territories of Castile and Aragon cannot be overestimated, nor can the contacts among them and the networks they established. They played a central role, for example, in reading the Qur'an to their communities and explaining it in the vernacular. The aurality of the Qur'an is important and worth taking into account. Inquisition trials testify to the *alfaquies'* activity of reading and commenting on the Qur'an to their flocks (Garcia-Arenal), and Christian polemicists knew very well the importance of hearing the Qur'an read aloud. This fact is attested in the chapters contained in the third part of this book, dedicated to the Romance translations made by Christians during this same period of the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries, and in particular the genre known today as *Antialcoranes* (even though in reality only one of these treatises, that by the Erasmian scholar Bernardo Perez de Chinchon, bore the title *Antialcorano*).

Despite firm evidence of Romance translations of the Qur'an among Christians in the late fourteenth to mid-fifteenth centuries, the earliest surviving translations of the Qur'an into Romance are those circulating among Mudejar and Morisco populations. Bridging the gap between these two separate streams of Romance translations, the Christian and the Muslim, is the figure of Juan Andrés, the converted *alfaqú* who worked in the service of preaching against Islam as part of the Christian missionizing effort of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.

The third part of the book focuses on these sixteenth century translations. Between 1502, when Isabel of Castile banned the Islamic religion in her kingdom, and 1526, when her grandson King Carlos V imposed a similar decree in Aragon, various authors wrote polemical works and sermons aimed at the evangelisation of the forcibly converted Muslim populations. There was a messianic idea that this conversion, which would become universal under the aegis of Fernando and Carlos (both of whom bore the title "King of Jerusalem"), would be completed in about two generations." The authors and patrons

of those polemical works, the object of our third section, believed that would be so. Those works were particularly aimed at refuting the Qur'an; or, in other words, at basing their refutation of Islam solely on the Qur'an. Their precedent can be considered the Spanish translation of the work by Riccoldo da Monte di Croce titled *Refutación del Alcorán*, printed in Seville in 1502 under the auspices of Archbishop Hernando de Talavera of Granada. The Latin edition of this same book had also been printed in Seville two years earlier financed by King Fernando of Aragon. We can see different strategies of conversion patronized by Castile and Aragon (as considered here by Scotto, Bernabé Pons, and Tottoli), still to be elucidated. It was not Talavera (though he was invested in using Arabic for missionary endeavours) who was directly involved in the promotion of works on the Qur'an, but another bishop also confessor to Queen Isabel, Martín García." Most of the authors of the *Antialcoranes* were connected to this Martín García—canon at the Zaragoza see, inquisitor in Aragon, later bishop of Barcelona—who had been asked by the Catholic Monarchs to come to Granada to begin missionizing and pastoral work there soon after the conquest of the city.

García gathered a group of people who became engaged in campaigns for converting Muslims in Granada, Valencia and Aragon, and who were writing treatises between 1515 and 1555: Juan Andres, Bernardo Perez de Chinchon, Lope de Obregtin, Marti de Figuerola. In a limited span of time a considerable number of works came into being. The writings of Martin Garcia, particularly his sermons, and those of his group of collaborators were constructed according to the same principles, using direct dialogues which question Muslims ("prkimo mio de Moro", something like "my dear fellow" or "my good neighbour"), and refer solely to Muslim sources. In reality, of course, the underlying discourse was a Christian polemical one, deeply but not exclusively immersed in the medieval tradition. This was the strategy of the aforementioned work by Riccoldo da Monte di Croce, which had a wide diffusion in its Castilian translation. But the authors of *Antialcoranes* plunged also into different medieval traditions, as Luis Bernabe Pons, scrutinizing the work of Joan Marti de Figuerola, shows, especially regarding the influence of Ramon Llull. Direct access to the Scriptures was for this group of scholars, much immersed in Erasmianism, an important principle. Bernardo Perez de Chinchon's work, in particular, was not only directed against Islam but also aimed to spread Erasmian ideas at a time when those ideas were already controversial.

All the *Antialcoranes* contain numerous qur'anic quotations which are recorded in Arabic transcribed into the Latin alphabet (i. e., in inverse Allamia), accompanied by a Spanish translation and the pertinent exegesis provided by the authors of tafsir. Ryan Szpiech explores the role of transliteration in Martin Garcia's work in comparison with later writers of the *Antialcoranes* genre—from Juan Andres and Marti de Figuerola to Bernardo Perez de Chinchon and Lope de Obregtin. Because those works cultivate a dual focus on language and doctrine that combines attention to the Arabic language with discussion of the qur'anic content, Szpiech explores the question of what role the ability to read Arabic—either silently or aloud—played in the missionary campaign of Garcia and his circle. He argues that written transliteration plays a valuable role in highlighting the place of oral presentation of the Qur'an in campaigns of preaching to Muslims and Moriscos from Granada to Valencia. Whereas earlier polemical writers sought authority in the presentation and translation of content from the Qur'an, authors of the *Antialcoranes* also used transliteration as a rhetorical tool to appeal to listeners through the sound of their Arabic sources. In so doing they were counting on the oral modality of Muslim engagement with the text. Ryan Szpiech demonstrates that Martin Garcia was not consulting a written Qur'an to make his transliterations, but was instead relying on oral information from a Muslim or former Muslim who knew

the material by heart. This interpretation reinforces what Roza Callas and Rodriguez Iglesias explored in the previous section of this book: the immense role of memorisation and orality in Morisco Islam. Also transversal to both these sections of the book is the question of transliteration: Romance in Arabic letters by the Muslims, Arabic in Latin letters by the Christians. Szpiech calls this second form of transliterating, or inverse Aljamiado, "Anti-aljamiado". He uses this term to stress that transliteration is not a neutral or transparent action, and to propose that in his view, putting the Qur'an into Latin letters in this sixteenth-century Iberian context is inherently a polemical gesture. The question of transliteration is, no doubt, in need of being explored further. It is obvious that in this context changing alphabets is not neutral, but rather a tool of identity formation or of undermining identity formation. Szpiech's suggestion that one community transliterates in order to express and defend identity, while the other employs transliteration to undermine that identity formation, deserves further exploration.

The first work in the series of what have come to be known as Antialcoranes is *Confusion o confutacion de la secta Mahometica y del Alcordn* ("Confusion or Confutation of the Muhammadan Sect and of the Qur'an"), published in 1515 in Valencia and attributed to Juan Andres, allegedly a faqih from Xativa who had converted to Christianity. Juan Andres, in the preface to his *Confusion*, claims to have converted to Catholicism in 1487 and to have preached to his former coreligionists in both Valencia and Granada, where he was a canon of its cathedral. He further states in the preface that in about 1510 he translated the Qur'an and the the Sunna. This project was undertaken at the behest of Martin Garcia. Juan Andres was familiar with exegetical works, quoting freely from those of al-Zamakhshari and Ibn `Atiyya and citing Ibn Abi Zamanin, who was known to the Moriscos (see Tottoli and Sellin).

Six years later, and before the Aragonese decree of conversion, Joan Marti de Figuerola, a priest who was also from a nearby region of Valencia and also worked under the auspices of Martin Garcia, finished his *Lumbre de fe contra el Alcoran* ("Fire/Light of Faith against the Qur'an"), which presents a similar exposition against the Qur'an. Both authors include hundreds of qur'anic passages in their works, quoting the Qur'an in Arabic in phonological transcription and in Spanish translation, and referring to tafsir authorities to explain each passage. Figuerola, whose work is extant in only one manuscript and has not yet been printed, also includes illustrations as well as the Arabic text of his citations written out in Arabic script. Marti de Figuerola does not use Juan Andres's translation, but prefers to rely on sources from the Islamic tradition provided to him by Juan Gabriel, a recently converted alfaqui from Teruel, who translated parts of the Qur'an for him and accompanied him on his campaigns. The abundant Arabic passages found in the Antialcordn literature deserve to be studied, not only in the context of the history of polemical writing against Muslims, but also as an the previous section of this book: the immense role of memorisation and orality in Morisco Islam. Also transversal to both these sections of the book is the question of transliteration: Romance in Arabic letters by the Muslims, Arabic in Latin letters by the Christians. Szpiech calls this second form of transliterating, or inverse Aljamiado, "Anti-aljamiado". He uses this term to stress that transliteration is not a neutral or transparent action, and to propose that in his view, putting the Qur'an into Latin letters in this sixteenth-century Iberian context is inherently a polemical gesture. The question of transliteration is, no doubt, in need of being explored further. It is obvious that in this context changing alphabets is not neutral, but rather a tool of identity formation or of undermining identity formation. Szpiech's suggestion that one community transliterates in order to express and defend identity, while the other employs transliteration to undermine that identity formation, deserves further exploration.

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We need to refer in more detail to the qur'anic project of Egidio da Viterbo, since the contributions by Katarzyna K. Starczewska and Maxime Sellin are connected to it. As Starczewska's contribution tells us, the original of his Latin translation is lost. What we have is a copy of the original (then at the Royal Library at El Escorial and probably lost in the fire of 1671) made in 1621 by the Scottish Orientalist David Colville, who for many years worked, as Germanus de Silesia did, in that library. In a three-page preface to his copy, Colville provides information about the context of the translation and about the people intellectually involved in its preparation. Colville mentions three individuals: Cardinal Egidio da Viterbo himself, Juan Gabriel of Teruel (Ioannes Gabriel Terrolensis) and al-Hassan al-Wazzan or Leo Africanus, famous for his work *Della Descrittione dell'Africa*. Leo Africanus had been captured at sea in 1518 and converted under the patronage of Egidio da Viterbo.

The sequence of work on the text, as explained by Colville, was that Egidio da Viterbo first commissioned Juan Gabriel to translate the Qur'an, but that translation was later corrected by Leo Africanus. Colville, when copying the translation, maintains all the versions. Thus Colville's manuscript contains a translation from Arabic into Latin, which had been commissioned by an Italian cardinal from a scholar of Spanish Muslim origin, who in turn lived in the Iberian Peninsula. The same text was then edited and reworked by another convert from Islam to Christianity, Leo Africanus, also of Muslim Iberian (Granadan) stock, who lived in Italy.

Marti de Figuerola also describes in detail how he worked together with Juan Gabriel and, again, how they had recourse to Hadith and the Sira of Muhammad. Figuerola was also involved in trying to convince the authorities in Aragon, as well as the Pope, to decree the conversion of the Muslims of Aragon. To this end he went to meet the new papal legate, the very same cardinal Egidio da Viterbo, when Egidio arrived in Barcelona in June 1518 together with Adrian of Utrecht. The role of Adrian (1459 —1523) in Habsburg politics towards the Mudejars is still to be considered further. Adrian was a mentor of Carlos, who was about to inherit the Hispanic Monarchy and become the Emperor. Carlos brought Adrian of Utrecht with him from the Low Countries when he came to Spain at the time of the death of his grandfather Fernando. Carlos made Adrian cardinal of Tortosa, General Inquisitor of Aragon, and elected papal legate and sent him in 1516 to Cardenal Cisneros, who for a short time was the regent of the Kingdom.

Adrian also accompanied Carlos to Zaragoza where he was recognized as king by the Aragonese Cortes in 1618 and where he apparently met Joan Marti de Figuerola. Shortly afterwards Adrian was elected Pope by the Roman Curia. When Adrian of Utrecht was elected pope as Adrian VI, he happened to be in Vitoria; he departed for Barcelona, from where he planned to set sail for Rome. He was accompanied by Cardinal Egidio. In passing through Aragon he remained in Zaragoza for two months and so, in 1522, Zaragoza briefly became a pontifical court. This interlude shows the context of the intertwined, complex and not always harmonious relations of the Crowns of Aragon and Castile with Rome as regarding the conversion of Mudejars and later the Expulsion of Moriscos. We have already referred to this fact when Fernando and Isabel adopted different strategies of conversion. The Catholic Monarchs were united in a single new polity, and also shared a vision of religious uniformity. But the limits of obedience to royal authority, and the relationship of that authority to the Papacy, were also in play. We want merely to sketch here a set of problems which are the context to the different trends and directions that the conversion and evangelization of the Moriscos happened to undergo through the first part of the sixteenth century. Cardinal Egidio was part of the papal retinue. While in Spain, Egidio commissioned a translation of the Qur'an and also other works, as Starczewska explains in her contribution.

The last chapter of this section, by Maxime Sellin, is dedicated to a manuscript of the Qur'an which can be connected to the purchases of Egidio. It is the so-called Qur'an of Belles, Bellus being a village near Valencia where it was copied in 1518, precisely the year in which Egidio was in Spain. The manuscript has interlinear translations and glosses in Latin, Castilian and Catalan, demonstrating that the Bellus Qur'an came into the hands of Christian scholars who wanted to use it as a tool for studying Islam's sacred book. The Bellus Qur'an is another important testimony we have about the process of collective and individual study of the text of the Qur'an: it preserves traces of all the phases and figures involved in this process, from the initial work of the Muslim scribe who produced a careful professional copy, to the insertion of explanatory glosses in the margins and the marking up of parts of the text that were considered of interest and that would later be used in sermons and different kinds of works written with the goal of converting Muslims. This copy of the Qur'an, during its circulation outside of Spain, appears in Egidio da Viterbo's intellectual circle. All evidence points to its ownership by the Orientalist Johann Albrecht von Widmanstetter (1557) of Heidelberg, who would have acquired it from the library of Egidio da Viterbo following the latter's death.<sup>1</sup> Therefore we can infer that this copy was used in the preparatory work for the translation commissioned by Cardinal Egidio. We can see through the example of Egidio how interest in Morisco knowledge arose in Italy: not only because of the collaboration of an Aragonese Mudejar in the ambitious intellectual endeavours of an Italian cardinal, but

also because Marti de Figuerola's work was brought to Italy (and copied there), together with a number of Aljamiado and Morisco Arabic manuscripts, by another papal legate, Cardinal Camillo Massimo.'

The stories of Egidio and many others before him (from Robert of Ketton to Juan de Segovia) prove that, in order to understand the Qur'an at a time when dictionaries and grammars were lacking, it was necessary to have the collaboration of a Muslim or a convert. And those were generally alfaquies, the persons who had an education in qur'anic and religious sources. The collaboration of Muslim alfaquies, converted or not, was fundamental to the enterprise of the Antialcoranes. We have seen that Juan Andres was a convert, and Bernardo Perez de Chinchón, the author of the extensive and elaborate Antialcorano written around 1528, worked, as he himself says, on the Qur'an with alfaquies in Valencia like the qadi of Valencia (whom he calls Moscayre or Mangay) and the alfaqui of Zumilla. Marti de Figuerola had collaborated with the converted alfaqui of Teruel. At the same time, as Ryan Szpiech shows in his contribution, the authors of the Antialcoranes, with their strategy of exhibiting the text and orality of the Qur'an to reinforce their authority, were probably targeting the alfaquies they were addressing; it is through them that they sought to implement conversion. All evidence indicates that the authors of Antialcoranes considered alfaquies as a group to be the best intermediaries through which to convert their communities, and the ones most susceptible to following and understanding their theological messages. This is not to say that we want to use the concept of "reception" in the sense that it may suggest some sort of homogenous intellectual entities in the engagement with Islam. In fact, the different types of Qur'an translations made in sixteenth-century Spain show how different registers of discourse could be employed for different audiences. For example, the authors of the Antialcoranes do not all use the same translation of the Qur'an, and they use qur'anic material in a different manner. They were probably consulting different works of tafsir. While Juan Gabriel's translation is almost certainly based on a previous Romance version, it is Juan Andres's Confusion that offers transliterations and translations of Arabic material to a vast group of polemical writers. All the Antialcoranes of the sixteenth century, including those that do not include Arabic text, recognize Juan Andres as a foundational source. A comparison of Juan's treatment of Arabic with that of subsequent Christian authors—in particular Marti de Figuerola and Lope de Obregon—shows that the Antialcoranes make use of Juan Andres's text in divergent ways. It is more productive, we suggest, to think in terms of clusters of people or networks within which individual texts circulated, and particular contexts in which these texts were then assigned meaning.

Coming back to Garcia-Arenal's contribution at the end of the second part, we perceive that around the 1530s the whole perception in Catholic Spain of the evangelization of Muslims varied dramatically. In that decade there was a strong shift in the means of achieving conversion. After the demise of the Erasmian Grand Inquisitor Manrique in 1533 and the work of the council of Trent in the 1540s, a significant ideological change took place in Iberian Christendom that among other things, curtailed the direct access of believers to sacred texts, including the Bible, whose Romance translations had been shun from the times of the Catholic Monarchs. Now it was considered dangerous to be using and publishing so much information about Islam that the Moriscos could easily access it and learn from it about their own religion and Holy Book. It was even recommended that accusations of the culprits appearing in the Inquisition's autos da fe not specify what the person punished had done, and what were his, or her rituals and beliefs." The Arabic language was now totally identified with Islam." It seemed that conversion was not possible through the means of persuasion considered by Hernando de Talavera, Martin Garcia and their followers a few decades before.

With the Inquisition's harsher attitude towards converted Muslims came a pessimistic feeling regarding what was felt as a failure in their conversion." Involvement with the Qur'an, whether by Muslims or Christians, was considered dangerous, and the Antialcoranes contained so much qur'anic material that they could be (and in fact were) used by some Muslims who had little access to the Qur'an or difficulty in understanding it in Arabic. Therefore, the Antialcoranes were banned and listed in the Indexes of forbidden books from 1559 onwards. The Bible in Romance translation appears in this same Index of 1559 as well. The possession of Arabic Qur'ans became dangerous for Christian bibliophiles and collectors as well, as García-Arenal also shows. But this position, which came to predominate and had important consequences, was not homogeneous, but full of contradictions. One contradiction was that Felipe II, the king who had forbidden Arabic, was at the same time forming an impressive collection of Arabic manuscripts in his Royal Library, which even today is one of the most important repositories of Arabic works in Europe. Felipe II began by depositing the collections of Juan Páez de Castro and Diego Hurtado de Mendoza; the latter had brought from Italy an important collection of Arabic manuscripts that he had acquired through his friendship with the exiled Hafsid prince Muley Hassan.' An ambiguous attitude towards Arabic books appears in many individual stories: the Flemish humanist Nicolaus Cleynaerts, in his letters directed to colleagues back in Louvain, relates that in the 1530s Francisco de Vitoria, a professor at Salamanca, had asked him to translate the Qur'an into Latin as the sole means of converting the Moriscos. But Cleynaerts, who went after Salamanca to Seville and Granada, even with the help of the Governor of this city, Luis de Mendoza, and of the bishop of Burgos (who was in Granada in 1537 for the burial of Empress Isabel of Portugal) was not able to obtain from the Inquisition Arabic books that the Holy Office had confiscated. The difficulty of accessing Qur'ans and Qur'an translations enhanced still more the usefulness of the Antialcoranes. We know that Moriscos bought them and used them as an aid to reading the Arabic Qur'an. In 1510 Hernando Colón, son of Christopher Columbus, who had collected an immense library, bought a rich and beautifully decorated Qur'an that he describes in his catalogue. The same catalogue entry includes Riccoldo da Monte di Croce's *Refutación del Alcorán* which Colón, who knew very little Arabic, probably used to guide himself through the qur'anic text. Even King Felipe II bought a copy of an Antialcorán in Valencia in 1541.

Felipe II's enforcement of the prohibition of the Arabic language and texts throughout the Peninsula in 1567 effectively ended the growth of the Antialcorán genre and altered the strategies for evangelising Moriscos in the mid-sixteenth century. It also ended the study of the Qur'an in Iberia. Nonetheless, the material organised and employed in the Antialcoranes provided a basis for subsequent discussions of and attacks on Islam outside the Peninsula. Arguments similar to those of the authors of Antialcoranes can be found repeated in later writers such as Tirso Gonzalez de Santalla, Manuel Sanz, and Ludovico Marracci in the seventeenth century, and Manuel de Santo Tomas de Aquino Traggia in the eighteenth. Juan Andres was a pioneer in the writing of anti-Muslim polemic, and his book marks a number of important firsts in the European encounter with Islam. Juan Andres's work was extremely influential, in both Spain and Europe: it was printed in Spain in 1515, 1519, 1537, and 1560. The first translation into Italian appeared in Venice in 1537, and another five editions followed, also in Venice, up to 1597. There was one translation into French (1574) and two into German (printed in 1598 and 1685), three editions of the Latin translation, one into English, and one into Dutch (1651). The work was forbidden in Spain by the Index of 1559. As has been said, other Antialcoranes suffered the same fate.

The fourth part of the book focuses on modern times. There is no doubt that the action of the Inquisition curtailed further attempts at knowing, possessing or translating the Qur'an. A couple of

centuries later it had to be "rediscovered" in Spain, but the translations made then were translations from the French, as the contributions by Juan Pablo Arias, and Fernando Rodriguez, Mediano and Isabel Boyano show. This second contribution unearths a hitherto unknown nineteenth-century manuscript translation in verse made by Filiberto Portillo in 1850 for Queen Isabel II. In this translation we perceive the traces of a new European phenomenon: toward the end of the eighteenth century Europeans began to view the Qur'an in a new light, as a masterpiece of world literature and a reflection of poetic genius. New translations sought to capture this genius. Already in the late eighteenth century there were attempts to convey the poetry of the Qur'an in new European translations, as part of a broader exploration of Islamic art and culture. An exploration that would continue until the Romantic period, whose relationship with Eastern cultures would give new meaning to the very concept of "Orientalism", just when colonial expansion was producing a radical change in the world political and cultural order. Here again Spain forms a contrast with the rest of Europe. Spanish Romanticism interrogates the role of Spain's Arabic past in its national identity, but at the same time, since Spain occupies a second rank among the European powers, Spanish culture depends strongly on that of other countries, France in particular. We have observed that some Qur'an translations studied here are essentially indirect versions made from French. Spain's unique role in the nineteenth century, at once (convert) translators across religious boundaries, including concepts of language, subjecthood and orthodoxy.

Is there a relation or an overlap between the qur'anic translations made by Muslims for Muslim use, and the qur'anic translations made by Christians for their mission of conversion to Christianity? Does the fact that Muslims and converts from Islam collaborated with Christians in these translations produce similarities between the two, or do Christians draw on translations made by Muslims? As we have seen, Morisco translations incorporate exegesis and shun literal translation. But the selection of qur'anic material differs: the suras selected in the abridged Qur'ans and the suras chosen by the authors of Antialcoranes rarely coincide. Antialcoranes selected qur'anic material on matters shared with Christianity, such as Jesus or the Virgin Mary, or on contradictions between different suras, or narratives that Christians considered unbelievable. The abridged Qur'ans have a different function: they provide prayers, and specially funerary prayers, selected to counteract the fact that Moriscos are living in a Christian society, they live their religion in clandestinity and are obliged to comply with Christian ritual. These abridged Qur'ans are a stronghold of Muslim identity. What can be learned, then, from the fact that they are contemporary in time and made by almost the same kind of people? Given how few texts and translations are extant, and what limited circulation they had, special scholarly efforts should be made to reconstruct their circulation and shared production between Christians and Muslims. This pursuit would reveal exciting episodes and entanglements across time and space (such as the Figuerola-Juan Gabriel-Egidio da Viterbo nexus that we have considered), and would be much more instructive methodologically than mere surveys or even analyses of tropes in themselves.

On a different note, some of these chapters inspire the need to enrich our discussion of censorship, authorship and dissimulation in Early Modern Europe, including challenging questions about co-authorship, reciprocity and power dynamics, since collaboration between members of opposing religious communities was often based on the subordination of one of the two subjects involved.

Material and linguistic aspects of the texts will also be in need of further development: for example, the questions produced by the existence of multialphabetism and interlinearity, multilingualism and multiple authorship. The process of the shaping of a language by the alphabet of another is still in need of further



scrutiny, and we have added in this volume the very interesting case of the Aljamiado Philippine Qur'ans. We also need to continue our exploration of the impact of the translation of holy texts on the construction and definition of new vernaculars.

Other aspects to be considered are the collection and circulation of Arabic manuscripts among Christian scholars and bibliophiles, the potential prestige as well as the risks for their owners in a country in which Arabic is necessary—these pursuits were prestigious but also dangerous. Arabic books were simultaneously collected and prized, but also persecuted, censored and destroyed. Qur'an manuscripts held religious (including talismanic) value for Muslims, of course, but also for Christian collectors: for noblemen and kings, and as prestigious gifts in diplomatic missions. Another whole new volume of essays begs to be written on the noble and royal libraries of Spain, Italy, the Low Countries, Germany and England and their Arabic collections, most especially the Royal Library of El Escorial. <>

## **THE EUDAIMONIST ETHICS OF AL-FĀRĀBĪ AND AVICENNA** by Janne Mattila [Series: Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science. Texts and Studies, Brill, 9789004506473]

Al-Fārābī and Avicenna are the two most influential authors of the classical period of Arabic philosophy, yet their ethical thought has been largely overlooked by scholars. In this book, Janne Mattila provides the first comprehensive account of the ethics of these important philosophers. The book argues that even if neither of them wrote a major ethical work, their ethical writings form a coherent ethical system, especially when understood in the context of philosophical psychology, cosmology, and metaphysics. The resulting ethical theory is, moreover, not derivative of their classical predecessors in any simple way. The book will appeal to those with interest in Arabic/Islamic philosophy, Islamic intellectual history, classical philosophy, and the history of moral philosophy.

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## Aim of the Book

Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 950/1) and Abū Alī al-Ḥusayn Ibn Sīnā (d. 1037), known in the west by his Latinized name Avicenna, are arguably the two most influential authors of the classical period of Arabic philosophy.<sup>1</sup> Avicenna's status in the history of philosophy in the Islamic world is unparalleled to the extent that scholars today often divide it into pre-Avicennan and post-Avicennan periods. Al-Fārābī was a significant influence on Andalusian philosophers, notably Ibn Bājjā (d. 1139), Averroes (Ibn Rushd; d. 1198), and Maimonides (Ibn Maymūn; d. 1204), but also on Avicenna's thought, and thus the Islamic east. Both authors addressed all areas of philosophy in their works but neither is known primarily as a moral philosopher. Avicenna's most famous contributions pertain to metaphysics and philosophical psychology. Al-Fārābī is known, in particular, for his logical and political writings, besides being an eminent authority in musical theory. All of this helps to explain the surprising fact that, despite their prominence, the ethical thought of neither author has received much scholarly attention. The present book is, therefore, the first monographic study on their ethics.

This lacuna in scholarship reflects a broader phenomenon of a relative lack of scholarly interest in Arabic philosophical ethics. This is perhaps the case due to its seemingly reductive nature in the sense that it is firmly based on classical philosophy. Thus, the ethics of Islamic theology (*kalām*), in particular, focusing on theodicy and the ontological and epistemological status of value concepts, has aroused more interest in scholars. Even within Arabic philosophy, the emphasis has been more in the Hellenic genre of philosophical therapeutics, and authors such as al-Kindī (d. after 870) and Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (d. 925), than the more traditionally structured virtue ethics. Consequently, there are no detailed studies on the ethical thought of even the most well-known philosophers, such as the trio of al-Fārābī, Avicenna, and Averroes, or Miskawayh (d. 1030) as the most influential moral philosopher for the posterity. This is not to say that there has been no research at all as important articles and book chapters have been written on the ethical thought of many philosophical authors, including al-Fārābī and Avicenna, and ethical subjects have been approached from various tangential angles.

The principal aim of this book is precisely to present a systematic study of the ethical thought of al-Fārābī and Avicenna. This aim involves several claims that the book strives to make. The first claim is that neither author's ethical thought is, in fact, derivative of classical authors in any straightforward sense. While it is true that in their primary accounts of virtue, they draw on Aristotle and Plato, respectively, this represents only a superficial aspect of their ethical thought. In the end, both authors build their ethical theories on a complex combination of classical and Islamic influences where the result cannot be reduced to any of their predecessors. This is true especially when their virtue ethics is situated in the context of their holistic philosophical systems.

The second claim is that the ethical thought of these two authors cannot be adequately understood as abstracted from philosophical psychology, cosmology, and metaphysics, in particular. For the present book, this has the surprising result that many of its discussions will not be purely ethical but will also concern those aspects of theoretical philosophy on which the ethical concepts are ultimately founded. This intertwining of ethics with theoretical philosophy has the further consequence that the study of the ethics of al-Fārābī and Avicenna contributes to a better understanding of their philosophy in general. When set in its proper context, not only is ethics grounded in theoretical philosophy but also many aspects of theoretical philosophy may be viewed through an ethical prism.

The third claim is that the two authors indeed have an ethical theory. This might not be immediately clear for two main reasons. First, the low status of al-Fārābī and Avicenna as moral philosophers is not entirely unfounded since neither of them composed a major ethical work akin to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* or Miskawayh's *Refinement of Character Traits* (*Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*). Nevertheless, they did address ethical subjects in a great number of works, and when taken together, these discussions formulate an ethical theory. Second, their ethical writings do not necessarily appear to be internally coherent in all regards. The problem is that the two authors define virtue in both Aristotelian and Neoplatonic terms, that is, as moderation of and liberation from passions. The contradiction, moreover, concerns the two levels of the ethical theory: the upper level of explicit discussions of virtue, in most cases, suggests a theory of moderation, while the underlying level seems to demand that virtue should consist of the soul's separation from the body. My claim is that this tension between two contradictory ethical ideals is merely apparent and that the ethical theories of both authors are coherent.

The structure of this book follows from the three claims I want to make. First, since neither author composed a major ethical treatise, the ethical theory must be reconstructed from various works. In many cases, these treatises approach ethical themes tangentially in a non-ethical context. This means that I will not follow the order of the ethical writings that they did compose. Instead, the book is divided into two main parts devoted to happiness and virtue. These are divided further into chapters, which address the primary components of the two concepts. This might be problematic if it were to constrain the ethics of al-Fārābī and Avicenna to a conceptual framework that is not their own. As regards the primary division, this is not the case since both authors explicitly define ethics as a discipline with happiness and virtue as its two principal objects of study. As for the subdivision into chapters, I believe that it is justified as a plausible interpretation of the primary elements of their theories of happiness and virtue.

The subsequent sections of this introduction address the Greek sources of Arabic philosophical ethics and the explicit definitions of the subject matter of ethics made by the two authors. The division of the first part into chapters follows the idea that the Arabic concept of happiness is composed of successive layers. The first chapter addresses the preliminary definition of happiness as the final end of the human being. The second chapter presents the Aristotelian function argument as the first argument for identifying the final end with theoretical excellence. The third chapter is concerned with pleasure, which both provides a further argument for contemplative happiness and constitutes an affective component for the psychological state of happiness. The fourth and fifth chapters deal with the definition of happiness with respect to its contents from a psychological and cosmological viewpoint, respectively, and the sixth chapter is concerned with the eschatological component of the concept of happiness. The division is based on my analysis of the constituent parts of happiness but is also justified by the way al-Fārābī, in particular, addresses distinct aspects of happiness in different contexts.

The second part on virtue builds on the notion of contemplative happiness established in the first part. Thus, the seventh chapter examines virtue from the viewpoint of its essentially instrumental relation to happiness. The eighth chapter addresses the explicit theory of virtue, which appears to contradict the notion of virtue presented in the previous chapter. The ninth chapter is concerned with the rational aspect of virtue, in particular, the role of moral deliberation and the epistemological status of morality. Finally, the tenth chapter concludes the book by arguing for the consistency of the ethical theories of al-

Fārābī and Avicenna: the tension between the two contradictory ethical ideals is resolved when the ideas of moral progression and different constituencies for the application of virtue are introduced.

As regards the internal structure of the chapters, each chapter is introduced by the classical and often early Islamic background of the subject in question. This serves the purpose of giving the context in which al-Fārābī and Avicenna develop each aspect of their ethical theories and highlighting the diversity of their sources. The introductions are generic and their aim is, therefore, not to provide a meticulous philological study of the ethical sources that the two authors employ. It is certainly highly desirable that much more research on the Arabic transmission of Greek ethical sources and their adoption and adaptation by the first Arabic philosophers will be carried out in the future.

In each chapter, the introductory section is followed by subsequent sections on al-Fārābī and Avicenna. This is perhaps the most curious choice I have made concerning the book's structure. The approach of presenting the ethical thought of two philosophical authors in a single book might be questioned in itself. Beyond this, I, in effect, constrain their ethical theories to a single conceptual framework. This is the case even though the two authors composed very different works, which address ethical subjects in different manners. However, I believe that the approach makes sense for three reasons. First, in their explicit definitions of ethics, the two authors share an essentially identical conception of its subject matter. Second, I believe that the underlying structure of their ethical theories is, in fact, the same. This is the case in large part because Avicenna adopts the general contours of al-Fārābī's psychological, cosmological, and metaphysical theories, in which both authors ground their ethics. Third, given their near unanimity in many respects, the thematic structure provides the benefit of highlighting the similarities and differences between the two authors as regards each of the constituent parts of their ethical systems. In many cases, it seems clear that Avicenna draws on al-Fārābī in his ethical thought, as he does in various areas of philosophy. However, it is also clear that Avicenna develops many aspects of ethics more systematically than his predecessor did. Obviously, it is also true that the two philosophers manifest significant differences as regards both their general approach to ethics and particular questions, and I have strived to indicate these in each of the chapters.

### Classical Sources of Arabic Ethics

As is well-known, the genesis of the Arabic philosophical tradition in the ninth century took place in the midst of a comprehensive philosophical-scientific translation movement from Greek into Arabic. Thus, Aristotle's works, Neoplatonic treatises, paraphrases of Plato's dialogues, late ancient commentaries, and treatises conveying many further authors and traditions formed the context in which early Arabic philosophers formulated their ideas. While the impact of a particular classical author or stream of thought varied between both authors and areas of philosophy, Arabic philosophical ethics, in general, gives the impression of employing a particularly syncretistic mix of classical authors. It is possible to distinguish three major classical strands of ethical influence: 1) Aristotle, 2) Plato and Galen, and 3) Neoplatonism. Even if some Arabic philosophers were influenced by one of these strands more than another, most of them drew on an eclectic combination of classical sources in their ethical thought. Thus, while al-Fārābī and Avicenna are self-identified Aristotelians, and Aristotle plays a prominent role in their ethical thought, they are far from being orthodox Aristotelians as moral philosophers. Instead, as I aim to show in this study, their ethical systems draw on classical sources in a complex way, manifesting a tension between Aristotelian and Neoplatonic influences, in particular, while also drawing on Plato and Galen. I will discuss the specific ways in which these three strands of classical

influences emerge in the ethical thought of al-Fārābī and Avicenna in the course of this study. Nevertheless, it is pertinent to first introduce each of them in more general terms.

## Aristotle

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is undoubtedly the single most important classical work for the genesis of Arabic philosophical ethics. The Arabic transmission of the treatise, however, appears to have been a surprisingly complex process. An Arabic translation of the whole text survives only in a single manuscript preserved in Fez. Ullmann has shown that this text is, in fact, an amalgam of two translations so that books I–IV were translated by Ishāq Ibn Ḥunayn (d. 910/11) and books V–X possibly by Uṣṭāth (fl. first half of the 9th century). Thus, the work was translated twice during the ninth century. In addition, there were at least three other texts that conveyed its ideas for Arabic readers. The *Summa Alexandrinorum* (*Ikhtisār al-iskandarāniyyīn*) is a paraphrase, later translated into Latin, which seems to depend on the translation of the Fez manuscript. A second text reworked the themes related to virtue and vice. It was incorporated early on into the Arabic *Nicomachean Ethics* as an additional book between the sixth and seventh books, resulting in eleven books in the Arabic version. The *Happiness and Its Attainment* (*Kitāb al-Sa'āda wa-lis'ād*), whose traditional attribution to al-mirī (d. 991) is disputed, employed yet another translation or adaptation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as well as Porphyry's (d. ca. 305 CE) commentary on the work.

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Given the different channels of transmission, it is sometimes difficult to assess the level of familiarity that a specific author had with Aristotle's major ethical work. The first translation was apparently produced in al-Kindī's circle, and al-Kindī cites the work by name. Despite this, his surviving ethical writings show little trace of Aristotelian influence. Al-Fārābī is perhaps the first Arabic author clearly familiar with the text, and he famously wrote a commentary on at least a part of the work, which we no longer have. Indeed, some of al-Fārābī's writings, such as the *Exhortation to the Way to Happiness* (*Kitāb al-Tanbīh 'alā sabīl al-sa'āda*), draw heavily on the first chapters of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. However, his *Philosophy of Aristotle* (*Falsafat Aristūṭālīs*) puzzlingly omits to mention the work altogether, even if it does mention most of the other works in the Aristotelian curriculum. Ibn Adī (d. 974), al-Fārābī's Christian pupil, draws on the *Nicomachean Ethics* in his *Purification of Character Traits* (*Tahdhīb al-akhlāq*). Nevertheless, the bulk of the work can hardly be characterized as Aristotelian. Avicenna mentions Aristotle's *Ethics* as the authority for ethics in his *Parts of the Intellectual Sciences* (*Aqsām al-'ulūm al-'aqliyya*). Still, his ethical writings show surprisingly little direct influence of the work.

In contrast, passages in the *Happiness and Its Attainment* depend directly on the extant Arabic translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Miskawayh's *Reformation of Character Traits* also manifests familiarity with the entire work, probably through the *Summa Alexandrinorum*. Nevertheless, both works are also very eclectic in the way they employ Greek sources. In the Islamic west, some passages in Ibn Bājja's *Rule of the Solitary* (*Tadbīr al-mutawaḥḥid*) and the *Epistle of Farewell* (*Risālat al-Wadā'*) also employ a variant of the Aristotelian text, while Averroes composed a commentary of the entire treatise. As a result, in many cases, it is evident that the authors had some access to the whole of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. In other cases, it is not clear whether these philosophers, who followed Aristotle in most areas of philosophy, departed from Aristotle in their ethical thought for philosophical or historical reasons. That is, whether they chose to disregard some aspects of the *Nicomachean Ethics* or whether they did not have the entire work at their disposal.

Despite all this, it is clear that the *Nicomachean Ethics* played a decisive role in the ethical thought of many Arabic philosophical authors, whether directly or indirectly. Aristotle's discussion of the concept of happiness in book I, in particular, constitutes, as I will argue, the foundation for the Arabic philosophical concept of happiness. First, it provides a preliminary definition of happiness as the final and self-sufficient human end (1097a15–b21). Second, it presents the so-called function argument (1097b22–28) for the claim that the human end should be identified with the function that the human being has as a species. Aristotle is equally influential in the question of virtue. The definition of virtue as a mediate disposition and the moral and intellectual virtues discussed in books III–VI form the standard presentation of virtue for Arabic philosophers, alongside the Platonic cardinal virtues. The two were often fused together both in late antiquity and in Arabic philosophy. Many prominent themes of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, however, did not find an equally universal audience. Neither al-Fārābī nor Avicenna accords the themes of justice or friendship (discussed in books V and VIII–IX, respectively) any prominence in their ethical writings, whereas among Arabic authors Miskawayh, in particular, discusses both of these extensively.

As regards the overall ethical ideal transmitted by Aristotle's *Ethics*, practically all Arabic philosophers agreed with the intellectualist reading of happiness in the tenth book (1177a12–1178a14), whether they were familiar with it or not. Nevertheless, the work as a whole does not, in fact, convey an entirely intellectualist ethical outlook. Instead, the good life for Aristotle would seem to consist of all rational and subrational human activities as practiced in moderation. Thus, the more starkly intellectualist ethical outlook adopted by most Arabic philosophers is not altogether Aristotelian. However, the Arabic Aristotelians could go beyond the *Ethics* to find support for an intellectualist ethical ideal in Aristotle. In the *Metaphysics*, the activity of the First Cause is identified with pure intellection, while *De anima* presents the human psychological faculties as a hierarchy with theoretical thought at its peak. As we will see, for al-Fārābī and Avicenna, these two works provide important arguments for identifying happiness with the excellence of theoretical thought.

## Plato and Galen

The ethical influence of Plato and Galen, to a large extent, goes hand in hand, and thus it makes sense to discuss them together. Platonism had its most decisive impact on Arabic philosophy, in general, through its late ancient synthesis, but for ethical and political philosophy, in particular, Plato also had a crucial unmediated influence. The question of the transmission of the Platonic corpus into Arabic is a complex one and has not yet been sufficiently researched. However, as in the case of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, it is clear that knowledge about Plato's dialogues was conveyed through various channels. Indirectly, Platonic material was transmitted in doxographies, gnomologies, and citations in various works. As for the direct transmission, there is no certain evidence that any Platonic dialogue was translated into Arabic in its entirety. However, a significant number of them was rendered as paraphrases. Many of these, including the paraphrases of the *Timaeus* and the *Republic*, were authored by Galen. Al-Fārābī's *Philosophy of Plato* (*Falsafat Aflāṭūn*), thus, discusses briefly no less than 32 of Plato's dialogues.

Consequently, several Platonic dialogues influenced Arabic ethical thought in different ways, whether by direct or indirect means. Many Arabic authors, including Avicenna, founded their theory of virtue on the Platonic cardinal virtues and the underlying moral psychology as presented in the *Timaeus* and the *Republic*, as opposed to the Aristotelian account of moral virtues. In these works, the general Platonic ethical ideal appears as the moderate one of the harmonious and ordered activity of the

appetitive, spirited, and rational psychical powers under the guidance of reason. Transmitting the Platonic ideal of virtue in a different way, dialogues such as the *Crito*, *Phaedo*, and *Apology*, along with the gnomological collections of sayings, conveyed the idea of Socrates as a philosophical embodiment of virtue. This ideal appears, for example, in al-Kindī's Socratic treatises, where the life of Socrates is identified as one of rigorous asceticism. Among Plato's dialogues, the *Phaedo* (cf. 67A–68B), in particular, *contra* the *Republic*, further contributed to this more ascetically inclined ethical ideal by identifying virtue with the soul's separation from the body. Beyond this, the Platonic dialogues also played a role in two subjects intimately connected with Arabic philosophical ethics. For philosophical eschatology, the *Phaedo*, in particular, transmitted the idea of philosophical paradise as eternal contemplative bliss of the human soul. Since Aristotle's *Politics* was apparently never translated into Arabic in its entirety, Plato's *Republic* became the most important classical source for Arabic political philosophy.

Galen (d. ca. 216 CE) is, of course, more famous as a physician, and his influence on Arabic medicine was paramount. However, within the sphere of ethics he was also an important philosophical influence. Galen's ethical thought is essentially Platonic, the Platonic tripartition of the soul forming its psychological basis. Two of his ethical treatises, *On Character Traits* (*Peri ēthōn/Fī al-akhlāq*), which survives only as an Arabic paraphrase, and *On Passions and Errors of the Soul* (*Peri diagnōseōs kai therapeias tōn en tē hekastou psukhē idiōn pathōn/Maqāla fī ta'arruf al-insān 'uyūb nafsihi*), had a significant impact on Arabic moral philosophy. This is particularly apparent in the Arabic genre of ethical treatises that can be characterized as philosophical therapeutics in the sense that these treatises offer rather practical advice for curing vices and psychical affections. *On Character Traits*, in particular, also influenced the more systematic ethical writings, including, as we will see, Avicenna's conception of virtue. As for Galen's general ethical ideal, it seems to waver between the moderation of the *Republic* and the asceticism of the *Phaedo*. In *On Character Traits*, he, however, clearly inclines towards the intellectualist ethical ideal. In consequence, even though the Platonic notion of virtue in the *Republic* can be read as compatible with the Aristotelian ideal of moderation, the Arabic Plato and Galen both contributed to the intellectualist ethical ideal adopted by Arabic philosophers.

## Neoplatonism

The interpretation of Plato's thought by Plotinus (d. 270 CE) and his late ancient followers made an even more significant impact on Arabic philosophy than Plato himself. Once again, the Arabic transmission history of Greek Neoplatonic texts is rather complicated. As regards Plotinus, while he was virtually unknown in the Islamic world by name, parts of books IV–VI of the *Enneads* were rendered freely into Arabic in the ninth century resulting in a hypothetical Arabic Plotinus source. All three known Arabic texts conveying Plotinus' philosophy are derived from this source. The longest and most important of these is the *Theology of Aristotle* (*Uthūlūjiyā Aristūṭālīs*), which, moreover, exists as a shorter and a longer recension. While the name of Proclus (d. 485) was more familiar in the Islamic world, many of the Arabic texts transmitting his works were not attributed to him. In particular, among the surviving Arabic texts rendering parts of the *Elements of Theology*, one of them was attributed to the Aristotelian philosopher Alexander of Aphrodisias (fl. ca. 200 CE) and another, *Book of the Pure Good* (*Kitāb al-Khayr al-mahḍ*), which later acquired fame in the Latin world as the *Book of Causes* (*Liber de Causis*), to Aristotle. While many further Neoplatonic texts were translated into Arabic, those with distinctly ethical import include the commentaries on the *Golden Verses of Pythagoras* attributed to Iamblichus (d.

ca. 320) and Proclus, and, in particular, Porphyry's commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which survives in neither Greek nor Arabic.

For Aristotelians like al-Fārābī and Avicenna, their adoption of Neoplatonic ideas was undoubtedly facilitated by the fact that two of the key metaphysical treatises in the Arabic Neoplatonic corpus were attributed to Aristotle, whether they accepted this attribution as authentic or not. The Arabic Plotinus and Proclus had the critical function of complementing Aristotle's relatively brief genuine discussion of philosophical theology in terms of the First Cause of motion in the cosmos, in book XII of the *Metaphysics*, with the Neoplatonic emanationist account of the gradual downwards progression of being from the first principle. Even if the Arabic treatises conveying the thought of Plotinus and Proclus, for the most part, are not devoted to ethics, the cosmological ideas of descent and ascent of existence and the origin of the human soul in the intelligible world are, nevertheless, of utmost importance for Arabic philosophical ethics. This is because they provide the ontological grounds for identifying the human ethical end with intellection in the sense that it is identified with the soul's ascent towards purely intellectual existence. Moreover, along with the Platonic corpus, Neoplatonism contributes to a philosophical eschatology of the human soul's eternal contemplative bliss. All of this provides a further argument for an intellectualist interpretation of happiness.

As for the more specific ethical stances conveyed by Arabic Neoplatonic sources, the Arabic Plotinus seems to be of prime importance. Plotinus devoted treatises of their own to virtue (*Enneads*, I.2) and happiness (*Enneads*, I.4). In the latter, his position is that since the "true self" of the human being is the intellect, happiness should consist of the life of the intellect, while moral virtue and the Aristotelian external goods are of no intrinsic value. The treatise is not included among the Arabic Plotinian texts, but the intellectualist ethical stance comes through also in the *Theology of Aristotle*. If Plotinian metaphysics and psychology are hardly ethically neutral in themselves, the anonymous Arabic redactor inserts ethical interpolations of his own. Thus, he explicitly identifies intellectual activity with virtue and nobility and the sensory realm with vice and baseness. As for the former treatise, it develops a distinction between the "political" (*politikai*) and "purificatory" (*kathartikai*) grades of virtue, corresponding to the ideas of virtue as moderation in Plato's *Republic* versus virtue as the soul's freedom from bodily affections in the *Phaedo*. Plotinus' followers developed further the idea of an ethical progression proceeding through increasingly intellectualist grades of virtue. Although it is unclear what the precise Arabic sources for conveying this idea are, al-Fārābī's ethical thought can be read in a way that comes close to the Neoplatonic ideal of grades of virtue. The Neoplatonic sources also convey a second kind of distinction, concerning the status of ethics in general, between pre-philosophical ethics, consisting of moral education that dispenses with rigorous philosophical arguments, and philosophical ethics founded on theoretical knowledge. Druart has argued that this distinction is essential for understanding the ethical thought of many Arabic philosophers, starting from al-Kindī.

In sum, the Arabic mixture and transmission history of Greek ethical ideas is a highly complicated one. Thus, even if it is true that Arabic philosophical ethics depends on classical sources, it is not derivative of them in any simple way. It is rather as if the Arabic philosophers had a rich menu of ethical texts of Greek provenance at their disposal from which they, in most cases, picked in a rather eclectic manner. As regards the general ethical ideal conveyed by the main classical components of Arabic philosophical ethics, all of them contributed to the intellectualist reading of the human end to different extents. At the same time, they contain a tension between two distinct ethical ideals: one of moderation, represented



by Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, and another that is more intellectualist, represented by the *Phaedo* and Neoplatonism. In this book, I will argue that this tension is both present and ultimately resolved in the ethical thought of al-Fārābī and Avicenna.

## Conception of Ethics

Before proceeding to the study of the ethical thought of al-Fārābī and Avicenna, it is worthwhile to see how they conceive the nature and aims of ethics. Arabic philosophers adopted from late antiquity a curricular scheme of philosophy where theoretical philosophy was divided into 1) logic, 2) physics, and 3) metaphysics, between which the mathematical *quadrivium* occupied variant positions. In the Arabic curricular order, practical philosophy followed all parts of theoretical philosophy and thus concluded the study of philosophy. In its classical Aristotelian division, practical philosophy was divided further into 1) ethics, 2) economics, and 3) politics. The very first Muslim philosopher, al-Kindī, in *On the Quantity of Aristotle's Books* (*Fī kammiyyat kutub Aristūṭālīs*), justifies the final position of practical philosophy by the grounds that practical philosophy, which serves the practical end of becoming virtuous, represents the "fruit" (*thamara*) of the theoretical sciences. This is apparently the case in the sense that knowledge about virtue should in some sense be grounded in theoretical knowledge. Both al-Fārābī and Avicenna share this general view about the position of practical philosophy as the crowning part of the philosophical curriculum.

Al-Fārābī presents his most complete account of the contents and order of the philosophical sciences in his curricular works, in particular, the *Enumeration of Sciences* (*Iḥṣā' al-'ulūm*), but also in the first section of the *Attainment of Happiness* (*Kitāb Taḥṣīl al-sa'āda*). In these treatises, the final part of philosophy is called the "political science" (*al-'ilm al-madanī*) in the former and the "human science" (*al-'ilm al-insānī*) or political science in the latter. This science differs from all parts of theoretical philosophy in that it is concerned with human voluntary (*irādī*) acts, dispositions, and ends, as opposed to the existents that are independent of human volition. Thus, political science, in general, investigates 1) happiness as the end of human actions, 2) virtues and vices, and 3) the political means by which 1) and 2) are realized. In all this, happiness forms the central concept: it is the ultimate end for virtuous actions and dispositions on the one hand and virtuous political or religious governance on the other. Al-Fārābī does not, then, distinguish between ethics and political philosophy as clearly distinct sciences but both of them instead constitute a single "human science." Accordingly, al-Fārābī's view of philosophical ethics is highly political and, thus, agrees with the political context in which Aristotle situates ethics at the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1179a33–1181b23). Nevertheless, al-Fārābī explicitly distinguishes between an ethical and political part of the human science. The aim of the former is to 1) define happiness, 2) differentiate between true and presumed happiness, and 3) determine the voluntary actions and character traits that lead to happiness. The aim of the latter is to investigate the ideal polities that best realize happiness and virtue.

In his curricular treatise, *Parts of the Intellectual Sciences*, Avicenna, first, makes a primary distinction between theoretical and practical philosophy. The aim of the former is to gain "certain beliefs" (*al-i'tiqād al-yaqīnī*) concerning the existents that are independent of human actions, whereas the aim of the latter is to attain "sound opinions" (*ṣiḥḥat ra'y*) about things related to human actions for the end of performing good actions. Following the classical tripartition, Avicenna then divides practical philosophy into ethics, economics, and political philosophy based on whether they operate at the level of an

individual, a household, or a political association, respectively. Finally, he defines ethics, in particular, as knowledge concerning the character traits (*akhlāq*) and actions that lead to happiness in this life and the next, where Aristotle's *Ethics* constitutes the authoritative work. In sum, al-Fārābī and Avicenna share a conception of philosophical ethics that may be characterized as eudaimonist, meaning that the central concern of ethics is happiness and its attainment.

Despite the clear distinction between theoretical and practical philosophy at a curricular level, for both authors, ethics is also intimately related to theoretical philosophy. In the *Attainment of Happiness*, al-Fārābī presents the curriculum of sciences as a gradual progression where one science leads to another. In particular, theoretical knowledge about the psychical and intellectual principles culminates in the question of the ultimate end of the human being, introduced as a theoretical question preceding political philosophy. Druart has argued that for al-Fārābī, ethics consists of a theoretical and practical part, where the former, *contra* Aristotle, is a demonstrative science with a metaphysical basis. Despite his presentation of practical philosophy as separate from theoretical philosophy, Avicenna in the *Parts of the Intellectual Sciences*, nevertheless, includes knowledge about the afterlife (*ma'ād*), also dealing with the nature of worldly and otherworldly happiness, among the applied parts (*furū'*) of the metaphysical science. Ethics proper is, then, apparently restricted to an inquiry concerning the means for attaining happiness.

This theoretically based conception of ethics manifests itself in practice in that both authors often address ethical themes in non-ethical contexts, while neither author composed a major ethical treatise. Consequently, the primary sources of this study are composed of a rather diverse collection of writings. For al-Fārābī, who elevates the concept of happiness to a central position in his philosophy, this includes many of his most well-known philosophical works. Among these, only the short treatise of *Exhortation to the Way to Happiness* is a primarily ethical work, while the *Selected Aphorisms (Fuṣūl muntaza'a)* also contains explicitly ethical sections. Besides these, he addresses ethical themes in the trilogy of works consisting of the *Attainment of Happiness*, the *Philosophy of Plato*, and the *Philosophy of Aristotle*, where the first is devoted mainly to political philosophy and the last two to an exposition of the thought of the two classical authorities. Finally, al-Fārābī discusses happiness and virtue in both theoretical and political contexts in many other works. These include, in particular, *On the Principles of the Opinions of the Inhabitants of the Virtuous City (Fī ma'bādi' āra' ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila)*, *Political Governance (al-Siyāsa al-madaniyya)*, and the *Book of Religion (Kitāb al-Milla)*.

Avicenna has a reputation for having neglected ethics, and it is true that his ethical contributions are disappointingly meager when compared with those he made to other areas of philosophy. Despite this, he does discuss ethical themes in many works. He situates his main discussions of happiness, in the context of the afterlife, at the end of the metaphysical parts of his two major compendiums, the *Healing (al-Shifā')* and the *Pointers and Reminders (al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt)*. The corresponding section of the *Beginning and Return (al-Mabda' wa-l-ma'ād)* also addresses happiness and pleasure in a more concise form. Beyond this, he also discusses ethical subjects in various other sections of the compendiums: value concepts in the metaphysical parts, virtue in both the metaphysical and psychological parts, and the epistemological status of moral propositions in the logical parts. Besides the compendic works, Avicenna wrote a series of shorter treatises addressing ethical subjects. These include the three treatises, the *Piety and Sin (Risālat al-Birr wa-l-ithm)*, the *Science of Ethics (Risāla fī 'ilm al-*

*akhlāq*), and the *Covenant* (*Risāla fī al-‘ahd*), that possibly have their origin in a more extensive book on practical philosophy that is now lost. Many other epistles, such as the *Treatise on Love* (*Risāla fī al-‘ishq*) and the *Epistle of the Present* (*Risāla fī al-tuḥfa*), also complement the picture of his ethical views, while the *Treatise of Immolation on the Afterlife* (*al-Risāla al-aḍḥawiyya fī al-ma‘ād*) is important for the eschatological aspect of happiness. As a result, for both al-Fārābī and Avicenna, their ethical discussions are fragmented in a great number of works and even different sections of a single work. It is the aim of this study to reconstruct their ethical theories from this diverse collection of sources.

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This book aimed to offer a systematic overview of the ethical thought of al-Fārābī and Avicenna. To accomplish this end, I presented three main arguments: 1) the ethical thought of the two authors is not derivative of the classical sources in any straightforward sense, 2) their ethics is founded on theoretical philosophy, and 3) their ethical writings together constitute an ethical theory, which is both systematic and coherent. It is now possible to weave together the different threads of the concepts of happiness and virtue discussed in the previous chapters and assess the three claims from a more holistic perspective. I will approach this through four specific questions. First, in which precise ways do the different aspects of the ethical thought of the two authors draw on specific classical sources? Second, in which sense does their ethics depend on theoretical philosophy? Third, what is the overall structure of their ethics, and to what extent are they successful in formulating a complete and coherent ethical theory? Fourth, given the very similar forms of their ethical theories, what are the most essential differences in their ethics and to what extent is Avicenna indebted to al-Fārābī?

As for the first question, this book has shown that, like Arabic philosophers in general, both al-Fārābī and Avicenna build their ethical thought on a complex combination of classical sources. The basis of their concept of happiness is Aristotelian. They draw on the *Nicomachean Ethics* in their initial understanding of the concept, the function argument, and account of pleasure, of which the final aspect is complemented by the divine pleasure described in the *Metaphysics*. Their understanding of happiness as regards its intellectualist content is both Aristotelian and Neoplatonic. The definition of happiness in terms of perfection is initially based on the concept of second entelechy in Aristotle’s *De anima*. However, the term perfection itself is modified in essential respects by its late ancient fusion with a metaphysical sense of perfection and identification with the final cause. The introduction of the cosmological aspect also draws on Neoplatonism: happiness becomes identical with a contact between the human and cosmic intellects and the human soul’s ontological ascent to a degree close to the incorporeal intellects. Finally, the eschatological aspect of happiness appears as a philosophical explanation of the Quranic account of paradise ultimately inspired by Platonic and Neoplatonic treatises, or perhaps more immediately by the eschatological interpretations that the previous generations of Arabic philosophers had presented.

Thus, the classical sources of the concept of happiness are essentially the same for the two authors. In contrast, in their theories of virtue, they draw on different sources. In Arabic virtue ethics, the Platonic and Aristotelian accounts of virtue exist side-by-side or even as merged together. As regards the individual virtues, al-Fārābī follows the Aristotelian account. Avicenna adopts the Platonic cardinal virtues but complements them by the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean, as well as the Galenic definition of virtue as a dominant disposition which practical reason obtains with regard to the bodily faculties.

Both authors, nevertheless, commit to the Aristotelian ideal of moderation at the level of their explicit discussions of virtue. However, since they define the human end, to which virtue bears an instrumental relation, in entirely intellectualist terms, they also advocate a second ideal of virtue. This is identified with the human intellect's separation from the body and its affections and corresponds to Plato's *Phaedo* and Neoplatonism. This is the case even though neither of them attributes derogatory terms to the body and the sensible world. However, in contrast to al-Fārābī, Avicenna does at times resort to the Platonic language of purity of the soul and divinization to describe the human ethical end.

The second question concerns the theoretical basis of ethics. Both al-Fārābī and Avicenna also discuss happiness and virtue in treatises and contexts that are purely ethical. However, I have argued that these discussions represent a superficial level of their ethics. The underlying structure is based on theoretical philosophy. In their major works, both authors address happiness and virtue in non-ethical sections. Thus, their ethical theory is ultimately grounded in metaphysics, cosmology, and philosophical psychology. It is founded on metaphysics because value concepts have a metaphysical basis. Both al-Fārābī and Avicenna accord the term perfection, understood as complete actuality, normative contents. The former identifies it with virtue and the latter with goodness. In consequence, the human good consists of the complete actuality of the potential inherent in the human species. The cosmic hierarchy of existents constitutes a descending hierarchy of perfection from the first principle downwards and thus also a hierarchy of goodness. Therefore, cosmology determines the position of the human good with respect to the cosmic hierarchy of goodness, pinpointing it at the degree immediately below that of the agent intellect. Psychology determines the precise nature of the human good by showing that the perfection of the theoretical intellect is the final and self-sufficient end for the rest of the psychical faculties and thus identical with the perfection of the human species. Since happiness is the foundational ethical concept, whereas virtue is defined in instrumental terms, the ethical system as a whole is founded on theoretical philosophy.

The third question regards the structure and coherence of the ethical thought of the two authors. When their ethics is set in the context of theoretical philosophy, the result is a systematic ethical theory of eudaimonist virtue ethics. In its large-scale structure, the basis for all value lies in the concept of happiness defined as the final end for human activities. Virtuous acts and dispositions constitute a necessary but instrumental precondition for happiness. The theory is systematic because both authors argue from a thin concept of happiness to a thick concept filled with content based on the Aristotelian arguments on pleasure and the human function. Since the human function is, in the end, determined by various branches of theoretical philosophy, which for the two authors constitute demonstrative knowledge, the main contours of the ethical theory are presumably demonstratively true. This large-scale structure is completed by aspects that concern a particular moral agent acting in the real world: the lists of individual virtues, methods for habituation to virtue, the nature of moral deliberation, the epistemological basis of morality, and the political-religious context in which most people ultimately attain happiness and virtue.

The main problem with the consistency of this ethical theory is that it seems to involve two contradictory ethical ideals: the contemplative end implies that virtue as its instrument consists of the intellect's separation from bodily affections, whereas both authors, nevertheless, define virtue in terms of Aristotelian moderation. Textual grounds and the Greek Neoplatonic precedent, however, justify a solution that resolves the apparent contradiction by introducing the ideas of moral progression and

different constituencies in the application of virtue. In the end, the metriopathic notion of virtue does not represent a universal ethical ideal for either author. Instead, in analogy with the political virtues of Greek Neoplatonists, Aristotelian moderation corresponds to the level of virtue embodied in religious law, which applies to all people equally. For the philosophers, the contemplative end entails a further degree of separation from the body.

The fourth question concerns the differences between the ethical thought of the two authors. In this book, I have presented them as proceeding more or less in tandem in their ethics. I believe that this is justified because their ethical theories, in fact, do have an identical structure. Both authors subscribe to the eudaimonist approach to ethics where the concept of happiness constitutes the foundational ethical concept. Avicenna adopts the general contours of al-Fārābī's metaphysical, cosmological, and psychological theories, and, for both authors, the concept of happiness is essentially a corollary of these parts of theoretical philosophy. In consequence, it is not particularly surprising that their ethical theories would be similar as concerns the general structure. However, it is also true that the two authors approach the subjects of happiness and virtue in rather different ways in their writings.

It seems clear that al-Fārābī had a significant impact on Avicenna's ethical thought, as he did in many other areas of philosophy. Some of Avicenna's concise ethical treatises manifest direct textual dependence on al-Fārābī's ethical writings. Beyond the general structure of the ethical theory, Avicenna also seems to draw on al-Fārābī in some particular questions. As regards the doctrine of pleasure, Avicenna expands and systematizes the account of his predecessor. The result is a more systematic argument for contemplative happiness based on pleasure than was present in al-Fārābī. This is also true of the metaphysical basis of goodness, which remains somewhat implicit in al-Fārābī's writings but Avicenna makes explicit.

However, it is also the case that the ethical thought of al-Fārābī and Avicenna is not identical. By applying the same thematic structure to both authors, to some extent, I have forced Avicenna to follow a conceptual analysis that perhaps best applies to al-Fārābī. Despite the similarities, the two authors often approach ethics in quite different ways. First, for al-Fārābī, the primary context of ethics is political philosophy, whereas for Avicenna, it is the question of the afterlife. Second, while al-Fārābī, in some of his introductory works, presents an elaborate function argument for the contemplative nature of happiness, Avicenna never does this systematically in an ethical context. Third, Avicenna's ethical thought is somewhat more Platonically inclined than al-Fārābī's. This is the case both in the obvious sense that he employs the Platonic division of virtues and in the deeper sense that he adopts some Platonic themes that identify virtue with purity and divinization. However, these aspects may be considered details, while it is still the case that the two authors share a eudaimonist ethical system with an essentially identical structure. <>

## **THE FORMATION OF POST-CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHY IN ISLAM** by Frank Griffel [Oxford University Press, ISBN 9780190886325]

Scholars have come to recognize the importance of classical Islamic philosophy both in its own right and in its preservation of and engagement with Greek philosophical ideas. At the same time, the period immediately following the so-called classical era has been considered a sort of dark age, in which Islamic thought entered a long decline. In this monumental new work, Frank Griffel seeks to overturn this conventional wisdom, arguing that what he calls the "post-classical" period has been unjustly maligned and neglected by previous generations of scholars.

**THE FORMATION OF POST-CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHY IN ISLAM** is a comprehensive study of the far-reaching changes that led to a re-shaping of the philosophical discourse in Islam during the twelfth century. Earlier Western scholars thought that Islam's engagement with the tradition of Greek philosophy ended during that century. More recent analyses suggest that Islamic thinkers instead integrated Greek thought into the genre of rationalist Muslim theology (*kalām*). Griffel argues that even this new view misses a key point. In addition to the integration of Greek ideas into *kalām*, Muslim theologians picked up the discourse of classical philosophy in Islam (*falsafa*) and began to produce books in the tradition of Plato, Aristotle, and Avicenna – a new and oft-misunderstood genre they called "*hikma*" in which they left aside theological concerns. They wrote in both genres, *kalām* and *hikma*, and the same writers argued for opposing teachings on the nature of God, the world's creation, and the depending on the genre in which they were writing. Griffel shows how careful attention to genre demonstrates both the coherence and ambiguity of this new philosophical approach.

A work of extraordinary breadth and depth, **THE FORMATION OF POST-CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHY IN ISLAM** offers a detailed, insightful history of philosophy in Iraq, Iran, and Central Asia during the twelfth century. It will be essential reading for anyone interested in the history of philosophy or the history of Islam.

### **Review**

"Frank Griffel's **THE FORMATION OF POST-CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHY IN ISLAM** is a must-read for anyone seeking to understand post-Avicennan philosophy in Islam. Through the study and contextualization of more than a dozen twelfth-century authors and in particular al-Rāzī's philosophical summae, this elegantly written, profoundly erudite book argues that the Islamic philosophy of the twelfth century "is no less philosophical than British empiricism or German idealism" and proposes a bold new assessment of the prevailing understanding of the relationship between philosophy and theology in the post-Avicennan period, both challenging and refining the cutting-edge debates on Islamic intellectual history" -- Judith Pfeiffer, Alexander von Humboldt Professor for Islamic Studies, University of Bonn

"Islamic thought in the twelfth, thirteenth and later centuries is now a very exciting field, which is

attracting many researchers. But Frank Griffel's contribution is outstanding. His magnificent new book on it is essential reading for anyone interested in the history of philosophy, because it both rewrites the standard account with its bold new thesis, and opens up the area to non-specialists" -- John Marenbon, Honorary Professor of Medieval Philosophy, University of Cambridge

"The post-classical period of philosophy in the Islamic world is still underappreciated but is receiving increasing attention from scholars. Griffel's important contribution to this endeavor is insightful in its treatment of major figures like Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. More generally, he gives a compelling picture of the nature of "philosophy" in this period, showing great sensitivity to the methods and goals of the different kinds of writing that should be of interest to the historian of philosophy" -- Peter Adamson, Professor of Late Ancient and Arabic Philosophy, Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich

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In September 1683 a large army of soldiers from Germany, Austria, and Poland-Lithuania won a battle against an even larger Ottoman army that had laid siege to Vienna, the capital of the Holy Roman Empire. That same year, John Locke fled England to the Netherlands and entered into circles that acquainted him with the work of the Jewish philosopher Baruch Spinoza. In Holland, Locke also found time to work on the manuscript of what would become his most important philosophical work, *The Essay concerning Human Understanding*, published eventually in London in 1689.

The last two decades of the seventeenth century marked the beginning of two of the most important developments in modern European history: Enlightenment thought and the military defeat of the Ottoman Empire. This was the moment when Europeans started to think of their own history in terms that we now call “modern.” They witnessed history as progress, understood as increasing rationalization and liberalization, as well as the creation of material wealth and the expansion of political power. When Europeans looked at the Muslim world, however, they saw nothing but decline.

From the early Middle Ages, central Europeans had become more and more used to thinking about Islam as Europe’s nemesis, the absolute opposite of all that Europe stood for. By the late seventeenth century, the threat that earlier armies of Muslims had posed to Europe had disappeared. The Turkish siege of Vienna in 1683— the second of its kind after an earlier Turkish attempt in 1526— led to a successful counterattack of central and eastern European armies that conquered, within a few years, almost half of the Ottoman territories on the Balkan. By the end of the seventeenth century, the Habsburg Empire had taken lands from the Turks that are equivalent to the modern countries of Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, and parts of Romania. Never again would Islamic armies pose a threat to a central European country. Quite the opposite: within only a century a European army stood at the gates of a major Muslim capital and routed its defenders. In July 1798, the French army fought a decisive victory over Egyptian forces during the Battle of the Pyramids. The defeat led to the first European colonial administration of a Muslim country. The Battle of the Pyramids was, however, only the first of many defeats that were inflicted upon almost all Muslim countries in the period between 1798 and 1920. After the Battle of Maysalun before the gates of Damascus in 1920, every Muslim country, with the exception of Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and several principalities on the Arabian peninsula, was ruled by Europeans.

Triggered by an increasingly critical attitude toward Western writings on Islam, scholars in the 1990s began to see a connection between the early modern European experience of a continuous progress in their societies and the Western narrative of Islam’s decline. Starting with the seventeenth century, European history was considered a process of advancement and improvement. “Europe’s history, despite all temporary setbacks,” wrote the Danish environmental historian Peter Christensen in 1993, “was characterized by progress, understood as cumulative change for the better in material as well as moral terms.” At the same time Europeans thought of Islam and the Middle East as the opposite of Europe, its inverted reflection. “So it followed logically,” Christensen continued, “that the opposite of

progress, decline, must characterize the history of [the] Middle East. With such a premise, it was not difficult to find confirming evidence."

The material and moral decline of the region that Europeans diagnosed was ascribed, ultimately, to defects inherent in Muslim society: "The Europeans had come to see progress as a virtual natural process. If a society had not evolved in the same positive way as Europe did, there had to be something wrong with it." One of the postulates of European thinking about the Middle East was that the religion of Islam is so heavily imprinted upon its societies that it can ultimately explain everything that had occurred, or failed to occur. Enlightenment thought also made a close connection between Europe's rapid political and economic progress during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and the rationalization it was proud to have achieved. The intellectual source of this rationalization was sought in Europe's tradition of philosophy. Born out of Greek culture in antiquity, Enlightenment thinkers forged a narrative of the history of philosophy in Europe that closely aligned with the cumulative progress that had manifested during their lifetimes. Yet, historians of philosophy such as Edward Gibbon and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel realized that the history of European philosophy was not one of continuous progress. The "dark" Middle Ages stood in the way of an uninterrupted increase of rationality in European thought. Since the reemergence of philosophical activity in Europe during the thirteenth century, however, the story they told about European philosophy was one of uninterrupted progress. If philosophy in Europe progressed, what did it do under Islam?

Together with the narrative of a rise of European philosophy after the thirteenth century came the story of a simultaneous decline of philosophy in Islam. Once, Islam had a great empire and an advanced civilization with cities such as Baghdad and Cairo that had few rivals during their prime. The Islamic Empire was seen as the last of the great civilizations of the Middle East and the Abbasid caliphs worthy successors of the pharaohs of Egypt, the kings of Babylon, and the khosrows of Persia. But Arabic high culture was only a very temporary phenomenon. In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy of 1817*, Hegel (1770–1831) treated Arabic philosophy not as an independent tradition but merely as one that bridges the Greeks with the scholasticism of the Latin Middle Ages. Arabic philosophy, Hegel writes, "has no content of any interest [for us] and it does not merit to be spent time with; it is not philosophy, but mere manner." For Hegel, Arabic philosophy is only the "formal preservation and propagation" of Greek philosophy, and has worth only insofar as it is connected to it. The Arabs created no progress in the history of philosophy and "there is not much to benefit from it" (aber es ist nicht viel daraus zu holen).

Hegel stands at the beginning of the Western academic study of Arabic and Islamic philosophy. He was closely followed by Ernest Renan (1823–92) and his 1852 study, *Averroes and Averroism*, the first Western monograph on the history of philosophy in Islam. French Enlightenment thinking and its enmity toward the Catholic Church heavily influenced Renan's perspective, leading him to apply categories to the history of philosophy in Islam that were established in the historiography of European thought. For Renan, philosophy in Islam suffered under the persecution of an "Islamic orthodoxy" that would eventually prevail and crush the free philosophical spirit in Islam. Renan wrote in 1861 that with the death of Averroes (Ibn Rushd) in 1198, "Arab philosophy had lost in him its last representative and the triumph of the Qur'an over free-thinking was assured for at least six-hundred years." What relieved the Islamic world from the oppression of a Qur'anic orthodoxy was, in Renan's mind, the French occupation of Egypt in 1798.

Enlightenment thought provided the legitimization for colonizing the Muslim world. Europeans convinced themselves that the decline they diagnosed in the Muslim world after their military successes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had set in much earlier and that it was connected to an assumed absence of philosophy in Islamic societies. European historians of philosophy created the narrative that Arabic and Islamic philosophy ended with Averroes during the last years of the twelfth century. The Dutch historian of philosophy Tjitze J. de Boer (1866–1942) was the first to write a textbook on the history of philosophy in Islam. It came out in German in 1901, with an English translation in 1903, and remained influential for many decades, up until the 1990s. De Boer's presentation of Arabic and Islamic philosophy ends with Averroes, who is followed only by a brief appendix on Ibn Khaldūn. Averroes was the peak of the philosophical tradition under Islam. His commentaries on the works of Aristotle were regarded as the most profound philosophical works produced by that tradition. Yet with him ended philosophy in Islam, and with him also began the rise of Aristotelian and thus scholastic philosophy in Europe. Averroes was the link that connected the progress of European philosophy with the decline of the philosophic tradition in Islam. Already in his book *Averroes and Averroism*, Renan had come up with the view that European philosophers valued the quality of Averroes's scholarship, whereas Muslims neglected it at their own peril.

Historians like Renan and de Boer in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were working with far fewer sources than what we have available today. Their decision to exclude a host of philosophers who wrote after Averroes from the history of this discipline, however, is not based on ignorance about their existence. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when Europeans started to explore the history of Arabic and Islamic philosophy, they knew otherwise. The books produced in this period had not yet adopted a colonialist perspective on Islam and the Middle East and are free from the idea that philosophy in Islam had ever ended. In 1743, for instance, the German scholar Johann Jacob Brucker (1696–1770) published a six-volume history of philosophy in Latin (*Historia critica philosophiae*), which includes more than two hundred pages on Arabic and Islamic authors. Here, readers could find relatively long articles on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210) and Naʿīr al-Dīn al-ʿūsī (d. 672/1274). Brucker mentions numerous authors of philosophy who wrote during Islam's post-classical period, and this despite the fact that unlike Renan and de Boer, he read no oriental languages. A similar picture emerges from the monumental four-volume work *Bibliothèque orientale*, published at the end of the seventeenth century in Paris. It was generated under the leadership of the French orientalist Barthélemy d'Herbelot (1625–95) and is a forerunner to the large encyclopedias of the French Enlightenment. The *Bibliothèque orientale* is based on an Arabic encyclopedia of the sciences that had appeared fifty years earlier, namely Kātib Çelebi's (d. 1067/1657) *Disclosure of Opinions about the Sciences and Their Books* (*Kashf al-ʿunūn ʿān asāmī l-kutub wa-l-funūn*). Kātib Çelebi was well acquainted with the major achievements of post-classical philosophy in Islam. Hence, the *Bibliothèque orientale* is full of information about philosophers such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Naʿīr al-Dīn al-ʿūsī, the Iranian Mullah ʿadrā (d. 1050/1640), and the Ottoman Turk Kamālpashazādeh (d. 940/1534) and their most important works.

In the nineteenth century, however, that information got lost in a narrative of decline. De Boer saw the reason for the decline of philosophy in Islam in the works of al-Ghazālī. The most knowledgeable and influential Western authorities in Islamic studies, such as Ignác Goldziher (1850–1921), Hellmut Ritter (1892–1971), and Edward Granville Browne (1862–1926), taught that al-Ghazālī's book *The Precipitance of the Philosophers* (*Tahāfut al-falāsifa*) had ushered in the end of philosophy in Islam. Al-Ghazālī was, as Browne wrote in 1906, "the theologian who did more than any one else to bring to an

end the reign of philosophy in Islam.”<sup>14</sup> After al- Ghazālī, and here I quote de Boer’s textbook, there were only “epitomists” in the Eastern Islamic world. Philosophers they were, de Boer acknowledges, but of a philosophy that was in decline, and “in no department did they pass the mark which had been reached of old: Minds were now too weak to accomplish such a feat. . . . Ethical and religious doctrine had ended in Mysticism; and the same was the case with Philosophy.”

Those who work in Islamic studies know that the view of al- Ghazālī as the destroyer of philosophy in Islam is still very much alive, particularly in more popular publications of our field. Today seemingly respectable publications still present him as the final point of any discussion of philosophy in Islam, not to mention the many polemical voices on the internet that fuel and are fueled by sentiments of Islamophobia. Among those who work actively in the field of the history of philosophy in Islam, however, al- Ghazālī’s assessment has drastically changed in the past thirty years. He is no longer regarded as the destroyer of philosophy in Islam. We now understand that his major response to the philosophical movement in Islam, *The Precipitance of the Philosophers* (*Tahāfut al-falāsifa*), is a complex work of refutation and is not aimed at rejecting philosophy or Aristotelianism throughout. It is concerned with twenty teachings developed by Aristotelian philosophers in Islam, and it vigorously rejects at least three of them, to the extent that it declares those philosophers who uphold these three teachings apostates from Islam and threatens capital punishment. The book, however, does not reject philosophy as a whole. In fact, it can be read—and it was read—as an endorsement of studying Aristotelianism to find out what is correct and what is wrong among the teachings of Muslim Aristotelians. In that sense, the book is a demarcation between those teachings of Arabic Aristotelianism that al-Ghazālī deemed fit to be integrated into Muslim thought and those he thought unfit.

The reevaluation of al-Ghazālī’s *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* as a work that is not directed against philosophy but aims to create and promote a different kind of philosophy from that it criticizes is seconded by an earlier development in the field of Ghazālī studies. Two important articles were published more than thirty years ago, in 1987, Richard M. Frank’s (1927– 2009) “Al- Ghazālī’s Use of Avicenna’s Philosophy” and Abdelhamid I. Sabra’s (1924– 2013) “The Appropriation and Subsequent Naturalization of Greek Sciences in Medieval Islam.” Frank’s article launched a whole new direction of research on al- Ghazālī. Earlier Western contributions on him highlighted his critical attitude toward the teachings of al- Fārābī (d. 339/ 950– 51) and Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā, d. 428/ 1037). After Frank’s article and a more thorough monograph published in 1992, 19 books and articles appeared that investigate what al- Ghazālī had adopted from falsafa. This has become the dominant direction of Ghazali studies in the past twenty years. Important books and articles made the case that many of his most original teachings are adaptations of earlier ones by Avicenna. By adaptation we do not mean that they are therefore no longer original to al- Ghazālī. Rarely did he adapt something from Avicenna without making changes. Often these were slight changes in wording that amounted nevertheless to significant philosophical and theological permutations. In his autobiography al- Ghazālī points out that the skilled expert produces the antidote to a snake’s venom from the venom itself.

Sabra’s article offers context for Frank’s discoveries, showing that al- Ghazālī’s adaptation of teachings from Avicenna and al- Fārābī was part of a much larger phenomenon in Islam. Sabra observed that by the eighth/ fourteenth century, sciences that were earlier called Greek and regarded as foreign had, in fact, become Muslim sciences. For Sabra this happened in a two- step development of first appropriating Greek sciences in a process of translation and adaptation to a new cultural context, characterized by the

use of the Arabic language and a Muslim- majority culture, and second by naturalizing them so that the Greek origins of these sciences were no longer visible. Although he did not work with Sabra's categories, Frank's contributions of 1987 and 1992 can easily be corresponded to Sabra's suggestions. Whereas Avicenna's philosophy is an expression of the process of appropriation in which the Greek origins of many of his teachings are clearly visible and even stressed, al- Ghazālī, who adopted and adapted many of Avicenna's teachings, obscured their origins and thus contributed to— or maybe even initiated— the process of naturalization. Sabra himself never applied his suggestion to the fate of philosophy in Islam. It is, however, a very fitting description of what happened during the sixth/ twelfth century and after. The movement of falsafa can thus be regarded as the continuation of Greek philosophy in Arabic. As Sabra's work foregrounds, falsafa represents the appropriation of a Greek science in Islam. Subsequently, the appropriated Greek science of philosophy becomes naturalized as *ʿikma*. The work of al- Ghazālī is, in fact, the beginning of the naturalization process of Greek philosophy in Islam.

In some of my earlier works, particularly *Apostasie und Toleranz im Islam*, published in 2000, on the development of the judgment of apostasy in early Islam, I tried to make the case that al- Ghazālī cannot be made responsible for the disappearance of philosophy in Islam. In this book I advance on closer inspection a different argument: philosophy did not disappear after al- Ghazālī. In fact, the period after al- Ghazālī is full of philosophical works, even if adhering to most narrow standards of what counts as philosophy. The existence of philosophy after al- Ghazālī is so obvious that we must ask how it could have been overlooked for so long. Did earlier generations of intellectual historians— including my earlier self— not see that there was a thriving philosophy after al- Ghazālī? Some did. The German scholar Max Horten (1874– 1945), who after 1913 held various professorial positions at universities in Bonn and Breslau, understood the importance of several Arabic works of post- classical philosophy that were printed in Cairo at the beginning of the twentieth century. He started to paraphrase and analyze them and thus became the first European expert on this kind of literature.<sup>21</sup> Horten, however, insisted on translating the Arabic technical terminology of these books into words that he thought his readers could relate to. He chose terms from Latin medieval philosophy and hence obscured the teachings and the originality of post- classical philosophy in Islam. Horten also failed to connect the texts to their context. This and the fact that his German paraphrases did not reach the philological standards of recent works by Goldziher and others confirmed an earlier impression— voiced by de Boer and others— that post- classical philosophy in Islam is repetitive and arid.

The breakthrough in this field is happening only now. It is the result of several factors, some of which I will discuss in this book. A proper understanding of the continuity of philosophy in Islam will not be achieved unless one realizes the crucial error that many intellectual historians of Islam have committed— and that not a small number of them still commit today: for the period after the mid- sixth/ twelfth century, the Arabic word falsafa no longer represents the full range of what in English is referred to as "philosophy," in German as Philosophie, or in French as la philosophie. All these words have their origin in the Greek word philosophía. Identical etymology, however, does not guarantee identical meaning.

At the beginning of this book project stands the realization, shared by almost everybody who works in this field, that al- Ghazālī's *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* is a work of philosophy. This may sound like a trivial insight that even earlier researchers such as de Boer indeed shared. The full implications for the history of

philosophy in Islam, however, have yet to be drawn. Even very recent contributions to the history of Arabic and Islamic philosophy contain statements saying that al-Ghazālī launched attacks “against philosophy in general, and metaphysics in particular.”<sup>23</sup> This, however, gives the wrong impression that his attacks had come from outside of philosophy. The quoted sentence excludes al-Ghazālī from the history of philosophy and suggests that he was hostile to rational inquiry and the advancement of knowledge through reasonable and convincing arguments. That was Renan’s view of al-Ghazālī. Renan taught that philosophy in Islam was attacked by outsiders like him who aimed at squashing it in the name of Islamic orthodoxy. In reality, what we see happening at the turn of the sixth/ twelfth century is the development of a philosophical dispute between those who defended Avicenna’s teaching on God and His relation to this world (the *falāsifa*) and the likes of al-Ghazālī who criticized this position.

Thinkers who followed al-Ghazālī in his criticism of *falsafa* were also engaged in philosophy and should be regarded as part and parcel of the history of philosophy in Islam. They must count as active contributors to the history of philosophy in Islam, as philosophers, albeit not *falāsifa*. This leads to the next important realization: after al-Ghazālī, philosophy in Islam was not the same as Arab Aristotelianism. In his *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, al-Ghazālī uses the word *falsafa* to describe the kind of Aristotelianism that is taught in the books of Avicenna, among them his most comprehensive work, *The Fulfillment* (al-*Shifāʿ*). Almost all philosophers writing in Arabic and Persian— Muslims, Christian, as well as Jews— who came after al-Ghazālī adapted this choice of language. Beginning with the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, which was published in 488/ 1095, the word *falsafa* was understood in Arabic and Persian as a label for the philosophical system of Avicenna as well as for the teachings of al-Fārābī and other earlier philosophers wherever they are congruent with those of the Eminent Master (al-shaykh al-raʿīs) Avicenna. Or, in simpler terms: starting with al-Ghazālī’s *Tahāfut*, the Arabic (and Persian) word *falsafa* meant Avicennism. Yet Avicenna’s philosophy— as has just been pointed out— was not the only philosophy that was practiced during the sixth/ twelfth century and after. De Boer’s mistake— and that of many other Western historians of philosophy who followed— was to identify philosophy in Islam with *falsafa*. This, however, would be— to use a drastic example— like equating Western philosophy in the twentieth century with Marxism. It may be true that in some corners of the twentieth-century world, such as the Soviet Union, all the philosophy that was practiced was Marxist. But that would still not allow historians to limit the history of Western philosophy in the twentieth century to that particular direction. Reducing the history of philosophy in Islam to *falsafa* contributed to the diagnosis of its demise soon after al-Ghazālī’s *Tahāfut*. This reduction led with equal consequence to the neglect of those philosophical traditions that depart from *falsafa*. Only once we realize that philosophy in Islam was something much bigger than *falsafa*—just as twentieth-century Western philosophy was much bigger than Marxism— can we attempt to write a true history of philosophy in Islam.

This book wishes to make a step in that direction. It will try to answer the question of what philosophy was in the eastern parts of the Islamic world during the sixth/ twelfth century. It makes the case that in addition to what was then called *falsafa*, there existed in the sixth/ twelfth century other important traditions of philosophy. One was the tradition that was founded by al-Ghazālī’s *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*; another was the philosophical project of Abū l- Barakāt al-Baghdādī (d. c. 560/ 1165); and a third and fourth are represented by the *œuvres* of Yaʿyā al-Suhrawardī (d. c. 587/ 1192) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/ 1210). All four directions of philosophy positioned themselves vis- à- vis the philosophy of Avicenna.

One of the most important philosophical differences between Avicenna and al- Ghazālī was their opposing teachings on God and His attributes. Influenced by Neoplatonic arguments about God’s unity, Avicenna developed a philosophical theology— meaning a theology that is wholly based on rational arguments without any recourse to revelation— where God acts out of the necessity of His being, which must be wholly one. This implies that, first, Avicenna’s God cannot change and, second, He acts without exercising a free choice between alternative actions. The first point implies that God cannot change from being a noncreator to becoming a creator. This results in Avicenna’s teaching of a pre-eternal world. In his *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, al- Ghazālī attacks this set of teachings by Avicenna and argues that a pre- eternal world is impossible. This, in turn, leads to the conclusion that God must be able to change from noncreator to creator and that He must have a free will and does exercise choice between alternatives.

This major difference between the thoughts of Avicenna and al-Ghazālī forms the backbone of any understanding of philosophy in the Islamic East during the sixth/ twelfth century. Avicenna’s Creator-God is what in the context of the Western Enlightenment has been called the “God of the philosophers.” The phrase is ill- placed in Islam, as it refers to a group of mostly French public intellectuals of the eighteenth century who had chosen the label *les philosophes* to distinguish themselves as thinkers who were independent of any commitment to Christianity and its Church. Still, their thoughts about God can help us illustrate and understand Avicenna’s ideas about God. Many Enlightenment thinkers, and among them many of the French *philosophes*, were committed to a deist understanding of God that developed in Europe in the wake of Baruch Spinoza’s (1632– 77) philosophy. The connections between Avicenna’s thought and that of Spinoza are highly interesting, but they go beyond the scope of this book. Suffice to say, Spinoza had access to Hebrew philosophical texts— such as those of Maimonides (d. 601/ 1204), for instance— that were deeply influenced by *falsafa*. According to a simplified deist understanding, God is the creator of the world, but He cannot interfere in it. God creates the rules that govern causal connections— what we today might call the “laws of nature” or “laws of physics”— through which He governs over His creation. Hence, God creates through the intermediation of long chains of secondary causes, whereby each creation becomes the intermediary for the next creation that it causes. God, however, does not choose these “laws of nature” that govern this process of creation by secondary causes. Rather, God Himself is governed by the necessity that these “laws” express.

Avicenna developed a highly impersonal understanding of God whereby the deity— who in his *œuvre* is most often referred to as “the First Principle” or “the First Starting- Point” (*al-mabda<sup>^</sup> al-awwal*)— never exercises a decision or a choice about what to create. In Avicenna’s understanding, God is the origin of all necessity that exists in this world, most importantly the necessity that governs causal connections and hence determines this world. A simplified but not inaccurate expression of Avicenna’s understanding of the deity would be to say that God is the laws of nature that govern His creation. He does not choose them, but He is them. Avicenna never would have chosen such language since he didn’t think in our modern terms of “laws of nature.”<sup>30</sup> Rather, for Avicenna, God is pure necessity— He is the being necessary by virtue of itself (*wājib al-wujūd biḥātihī*)— meaning He is the reason for how all other things must be. These “other things” are the beings that are necessary by virtue of something else (*wājib al-wujūd bi-ghayrihī*), namely by virtue of God. Once modern European philosophy understands the necessary as being expressed by laws of nature, it is only a small step from Avicenna’s understanding of God as necessity to Spinoza’s *deus sive natura* (God, meaning Nature).

If creation is an expression of the necessity that God is, then creation must last as long as God lasts, which is from past eternity. This latter implication offered al-Ghazālī the philosophical angle to criticize Avicenna’s conceptualization of God. For al- Ghazālī, the God of Avicenna was not the God that is described in the Muslim revelation. Motivated by his commitment to Ash`arite Muslim theology, al- Ghazālī found in revelation an active God who chooses to create this world among an almost infinite number of alternative ones. God’s will (*irāda*) and His choice (*ikhtiyār*) are the two cornerstones of al- Ghazālī’s understanding of the divine. He faced the problem, however, that Avicenna did not deny that God has a will and a choice, even if he meant different things with these words than al- Ghazālī did. Rather than quibbling with Avicenna over the meaning of divine attributes, al- Ghazālī chose to attack the *falāsifa*’s understanding of the divine via the implication of a pre- eternal world. If he could show that a world without a beginning in time is impossible and that, for instance, an infinite number of moments could never have existed in the past, then al- Ghazālī would have refuted Avicenna’s understanding of God. Without the possibility of a preeternal world, there would need to be a decision on the part of God to start creating. If there was that first decision about creation, many other decisions and many other choices could follow.

While arguments about the eternity of the world were one of the philosophical battlegrounds of the conflict between Avicenna and al- Ghazālī, the conflict itself was about two different understandings of God. It would, however, be wrong to say that one party in this conflict stood on the side of revelation— or worse: religion— and the other on the side of philosophy. Given that the conflict was about our human understanding of God, it should be clear that both parties were engaged in a process of religious thinking or, if one wants, in thinking about religion. Producing his arguments against Avicenna, al- Ghazālī was certainly motivated by his Ash`arite reading of Muslim revelation. Avicenna, however, had also developed an understanding of revelation that was perfectly in line with his conceptualization of God. In several of his works Avicenna writes commentaries on verses and short suras of the Qur’an. Although he never expressed it explicitly, we have good reason to assume that Avicenna considered his understanding of revelation and his conceptualization of God a sound expression of Islam and just as Islamic as many contemporary views, including the Ash`arite one. What’s more, we should understand that Avicenna thought of his interpretation of Islam and its revelation as truth. For him, other Muslim groups, such as the Mu`tazilites and Ash`arites, had failed to reach that truth. The clash was not between “revelation” and “philosophy” but rather between different readings of revelation and between different ways of arguing philosophically.

During the sixth/ twelfth century, that is, during the century after al- Ghazālī’s philosophical intervention, there were philosophers who followed Avicenna just as there were those who followed al- Ghazālī. What is most curious, however, and what prompted me to write this book, is the observation that less than a hundred years after al- Ghazālī, in the last quarter of the sixth/ twelfth century, we find authors who write one set of books that defend Avicenna’s understanding of God and another set that defend al- Ghazālī’s. Fakhr al- Din al- Rāzi was the first author, as far as I can see, who composed works in *kalām* (rational theology) where he followed in al- Ghazālī’s footsteps to criticize Avicenna and others in *ʿikma* (philosophy), where he aimed at improving the philosophical system of Avicenna. To be clear: the former set of books argues for different conclusions from the latter ones. This study will trace the emergence of books on *ʿikma* from al- Ghazālī, where we find the first seeds of this genre, to its fully developed form in Fakhr al- Din al- Rāzi.



The main thesis of this book is that authors of post- classical philosophy such as Fakhr al- Din al- Rāzi wrote books in the discipline of philosophy (*ʿikma*) that are conscious in their continuation of the discourse of *falsafa* in Islam while also writing books in the discipline of rational theology (*kalām*) that are part of a different genre of texts and follow different discursive rules. Al- Rāzi was the first of a line of thinkers who in their works of *ʿikma* defended some of the teachings of Avicenna, yet in their books of *kalām* defended Ashʿarite teachings on the same subjects. While there are some areas of thought where Avicennism and Ashʿarism are quite compatible with one another— cosmology, the theory of human acts, for instance, or ethics— they are at loggerheads when it comes to the conceptualization of God and His attributes. Here, there is no middle ground between Avicennism and Ashʿarism, and by extension between the results of *ʿikma* and *kalām*. Indeed, we see that works in these two genres argue for directly opposing conclusions on such subjects as the world’s pre- eternity and the closely related subject of divine essence and divine attributes, particularly God’s will and His choice. And yet, these two different sets of books were written by the same authors! Fakhr al-Dīn’s younger contemporary Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631/ 1233) wrote books in *hikma* (al-Nūr al-bāhir and Kashf al-tamwihāt) and books in *kalām* (Abkār al-afkār and Ghāyat al-marām) where the same phenomenon of opposing conclusions can be observed. In the next generation, Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī’s (d. 663/ 1265) Guide to Philosophy (Hidāyat al- hikma) was one of most successful textbooks of *hikma*, attracting many commentaries that show how it was adopted to madrasa curricula. Yet al- Abharī also left us a book on *kalām* (Risāla fi ʿilm al-kalām). Another example is Shams al- Dīn al- Samarqandī’s (d. 722/ 1322) highly successful textbook of techniques and strategies in disputations (al- Risāla fi ādāb al- bahth wa-l-munāzara), which assumes that there were different ways of arguing in *hikma* and in *kalām* and which provides different sets of examples for these two genres.<sup>33</sup>

The distinction between works of *hikma* and those of *kalām* becomes well established in the seventh/ thirteenth century, and while this question lies outside the focus of this monograph, it seems to have existed continuously until the nineteenth century, when the curricula of madrasa education in Islamic countries were replaced by those of newly founded European- style polytechnics and universities. If anything, these new institutions destroyed post- classical philosophy in Islam. Its home was the madrasa, which financed its activities out of the revenues of pious endowments (sing. *waqf* or *hubus*) of land and real estate. No uprising of nomadic Turkmen nor the devastations of the Mongol conquest caused as much damage to this educational system and to the continuity of an indigenous philosophical tradition in Islam as a single law that abolished the endowments of the madrasas or that simply privileged personal private property over *waqf* and *hubus* landownership. Yet these laws were passed in countless Muslim countries during the period of Western colonization. Rather than any single Muslim opponent of *falsafa*, it seems that colonial domination and a Muslim eagerness to catch up with the economic and intellectual developments of the West caused the end of the kind of philosophical discourse explored in this book.

Another way of presenting the goal of this study is to say that it tries to explain Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzi’s two early philosophical compendia, The Eastern Investigations (al-Mabāhith al-mashriqiyya) and The Compendium on Philosophy and Logic (al-Mulakhkhas fi l- hikma wa-l-mantiq). These are puzzling works that present a philosophical system that, on the one hand, follows Avicenna and, on the other hand, tries to alter and improve him. Why, however, would the Muslim theologian Fakhr al- Din al- Rāzi, author of a massive Qur’an commentary and many successful books on Ashʿarite *kalām*, aim to improve the system of Avicenna’s philosophy, a philosophy that al- Ghazālī in his *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* had condemned as unbelief and apostasy from Islam? Earlier literature on Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzi has mostly avoided dealing

with the problem that these two books pose. Muhammad Sālih al-Zarkān (1936–2013), the author of a very impressive early monograph study on Fakhr al- Din al-Rāzi, published in 1971, dismissed his Eastern Investigations as an “early work, where al- Rāzi got carried away over and above the falāsifa.” Given that in all of the other works of Fakhr al- Din that al- Zarkān examined closely he wrote like an Ash`arite mutakallim, this one book should be dismissed as youthful folly. Later, al- Zarkān says, al-Rāzi’s positions developed into those put forward in his books on kalām. That line of argument was taken either explicitly or implicitly by many scholars who tried to establish a consistent set of teachings in Fakhr al- Din’s œuvre. This line, however, is closed to us since Esref Altas’s 2013 study on the chronology of al- Rāzi’s corpus. Altas shows that Fakhr al- Din started his career with a short book in kalām, followed by his Eastern Investigations, when he was still in his late twenties. This was followed by his most influential book in kalām, The Utmost Reach of Rational Knowledge in Theology (Nihāyat al-ʿuqūl fi dirāyat al-usūl). All these works precede al-Rāzi’s Compendium on Philosophy and Logic—his second major book in ʿikma— which was completed in 579/ 1184, when he was thirty-three years old.<sup>35</sup> Should we assume that Fakhr al- Din started his career as an Ash`arite mutakallim, then drifted toward defending Avicenna’s philosophy, only to return to being an Ash`arite, and then once again falling for the temptations of Avicenna? Such drastic reversals of opinion are implausible even for such a flamboyant and self- confident thinker as Fakhr al- Din al- Rāzi.

We must therefore accept that Fakhr al- Din al- Rāzi and with him the tradition of post- classical philosophy in Islam were in one way or another committed to the teachings of both ʿikma and of Ash`arite kalām. Which way exactly will be one of the questions this study must answer. What prompted Fakhr al-Din— and with him al-ʿAmiri, al-Abhari, al- Samarqandi, and many others— not only to present the Avicennan philosophical system in over 1,500 pages but also to alter and improve upon it? What were those improvements, and how should we think about them? Finally, what does this mean for our view of the history of philosophy in Islam? Was Fakhr al- Din’s engagement with philosophy merely an academic exercise, and was de Boer correct when he suggested more than a hundred years ago that books such as al- Rāzi’s Eastern Investigations were the idle pastime (Zeitvertreib) of an intellectual elite at a time when “no one felt called upon to come forward with independent views [and] the time had come for abridgements, commentaries, glosses, and glosses upon glosses”?

This book deals with the period immediately after al- Ghazāli and studies developments during the hundred years after his death in 505/1111. It tells how the philosophical tradition founded by Avicenna and criticized by al-Ghazāli found a new expression in the works of Fakhr al- Din al- Rāzi. With this book comes also the claim that the development from al- Ghazāli to al- Rāzi can be studied as a unit and to some degree separated from what will happen in the seventh/ thirteenth century and later. Fakhr al- Din al- Rāzi’s œuvre marks a watershed in the history of post- classical Islamic philosophy. He wrote the philosophical books that influence later generations of scholars in post- classical Islamic thought. Nonetheless, this book is no comprehensive survey of philosophy in Islam during the sixth/ twelfth century. First, I leave out the philosophical tradition of al- Andalus and Morocco by authors such as Ibn Bājja (d. 533/ 1139), Ibn ʿufayl (d. 581/ 1185–86), and Averroes (Ibn Rushd, d. 595/ 1198). Due to the influence they had on European philosophy, the philosophers of al-Andalus have always attracted much attention among Western researchers. Their story does not need to be retold. It is also significantly different from the developments in the Islamic East, to the extent that the latter can be studied separately. As of now, there is no sign, for instance, that any philosopher active in Iraq, Iran, and Central Asia during the sixth/ twelfth century ever read the works of these three. The second philosophical

tradition of the sixth/ twelfth century that I cannot do full justice to in this study is that of Ya<sup>ʿ</sup>yā al-Suhrawardi. It forms the nucleus of what will later, in the second half of the seventh/ thirteenth century, develop into the tradition of Illuminationist (ishrāqī) philosophy. Al-Suhrawardi was a highly original philosopher with an extremely rich body of work. He is included in this study, however, only as far as it is necessary to explain the development from al-Ghazālī to Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī.

The questions that this book tries to answer touch on many aspects of the practice of philosophy during the sixth/ twelfth century in the Islamic East. While the main focus lies in the development that led to Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī's two philosophical compendia, *The Eastern Investigations* and *The Compendium on Philosophy and Logic*, the book also asks about the material conditions of practicing philosophy, about the patronage that philosophers received, and about those patrons and their motives. Another important set of questions is connected to the relationship between philosophy and religious law. Did religious scholars stigmatize or even persecute those who practiced philosophy? To answer all these questions, this book is divided into three main parts. The first part examines the context of post-classical philosophy in Islam during the sixth/ twelfth century and the conditions of its practice. It starts out with a brief chapter on the century's political and economic history that touches on a subject that has always loomed large in every Western discussion of post-classical philosophy in Islam, namely that of political, economic, and cultural decline. Was the sixth/ twelfth century a period of decline in the Islamic East? Deborah G. Tor has argued that during the mid-sixth/ twelfth century the eastern Islamic world, and here particularly the key province of Khorasan, experienced a "catastrophic cultural and political eclipse."<sup>38</sup> Given that, according to Tor, Khorasan did "very well until the 1150s," that downfall was rather sudden and abrupt. It also preceded by fifty to sixty years the destruction caused by the arrival of the Mongols. The Mongol armies under Chinggis Khan crossed the border of the Islamic world in the spring of 616/ 1219, about a decade after the death of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in 606/ 1210, a date that marks the end of the period this study analyzes. The Mongol conquest of the Islamic East has always been identified as the cause of steep economic and cultural decline. Tor, however, predates Khorasan's cultural downturn to an event in 548/ 1153. If true, this would mean that the major steps of development toward post-classical philosophy in Islam happened in a context of economic and cultural crisis. This should give us pause to reconsider how a culture or society was in decline. The first chapter of this book looks at the evidence for decline in the eastern Islamic world during the sixth/ twelfth century and tries to problematize the category itself.

The other two chapters of Part I are devoted to important questions relating to the practice of philosophy. The second chapter looks at the terminological move from *falsafa* toward *ʿikma*. Following al-Ghazālī's critique in his *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, the word *falāsifa* acquired a distinctly denominational meaning in the sense of a religious group with identifiable religious tenets. It hence became similar to "Mu`tazilites" or "Ash`arites." This move shaped the subsequent understanding of *falsafa* as "Avicennism." The third chapter deals with a subject that has always played an important role in every Western analysis of philosophy in Islam: the relationship between philosophy and the religious law (*shariʿa*). In his *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, al-Ghazālī condemned three teachings of Avicenna as unbelief and apostasy from Islam, potentially punishable by death. These three teachings were the *falāsifa*'s view that (1) the world has no beginning in time and exists from past eternity, (2) God's knowledge includes only concepts and classes of beings and no individuals, and (3) there will be no resurrection of bodies in the afterlife. Elsewhere, I have dealt with the development in legal and theological thinking that led to al-Ghazālī's judgment of apostasy and with the conditions under which it was passed. Here in this book, I

will look into the effects that this and other condemnations had on the practice of philosophy during the sixth/ twelfth century.

The second part of the book examines the lives of philosophers in the Islamic East during the sixth/ twelfth century. It first presents the textual sources and then discusses their biographies. In the historiography of philosophers during this period there is a change from falsafa to hikma that happens around 540/ 1145. Philosophical authors before that date are generally described as falāsifa, most authors after that date as hukamā'. Falsafa and hikma should both be translated as “philosophy,” even if they have different connotations in Arabic. The chapter explains the change and clarifies in what way hikma was different from falsafa, at least in the eyes of those authors who promote this difference. The bulk of this chapter, however, consists of a contextualized study of the philosophers’ lives, establishes a corpus of their writing, and— wherever it is able to do so— gives an overview of the chronology of their writings. The bibliography at the end of the book begins with an inventory of philosophical works in Arabic and Persian from the sixth/ twelfth century in the Islamic East that covers all those texts that I am aware of.

The third part of this book deals with the philosophical books themselves. This part starts with the question: What are the “philosophical books” (kutub hikmiyya) that Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī refers to in several of his writings? This will bring us quickly to a corpus of three major works and several shorter epistles in which al- Rāzī presents his ideas in the discipline of hikma. Most important are his Eastern Investigations and Compendium on Philosophy and Logic. My analysis is divided into three chapters, the first dealing with the teachings in these two books, the second with the development of the genre of hikma, and the third with the method of books of hikma vis- à- vis that of kalām. While the goal in each of the three chapters will be to explain the teachings, genre, and methods of al-Rāzī’s al-Mabāhith and al-Mulakhkhas, they will also look at the developments that lead toward them, focusing particularly on works by al- Ghazālī—his Doctrines of the Philosophers (Maqāsid al-falāsifa)— and on Abū l- Barakāt al-Baghdādī as well as Sharaf al-Dīn al-Masʿūdī. <>

## **THE GOLDEN CALF BETWEEN BIBLE AND QUR'AN: SCRIPTURE, POLEMIC, AND EXEGESIS FROM LATE ANTIQUITY TO ISLAM** by Michael Pregill [Oxford Studies in the Abrahamic Religions, Oxford University Press, 9780198852421]

A compelling exploration of the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic understandings of the account of the Golden Calf

- Contributes to the ongoing reevaluation of the relationship between Bible and Qur'an
- The first major monograph on the story of the Golden Calf
- The book also addresses the issue of Western approaches to the Qur'an, arguing that the historical reliance of scholars and translators on classical Muslim exegesis of scripture has led to misleading conclusions

This book explores the story of the Israelites' worship of the Golden Calf in its Jewish, Christian, and Muslim contexts, from ancient Israel to the emergence of Islam. It focuses in particular on the Qur'an's presentation of the narrative and its background in Jewish and Christian retellings of the episode from Late Antiquity. Across the centuries, the interpretation of the Calf episode underwent major changes reflecting the varying cultural, religious, and ideological contexts in which various communities used the story to legitimate their own tradition, challenge the claims of others, and delineate the boundaries between self and other. The book contributes to the ongoing reevaluation of the relationship between Bible and Qur'an, arguing for the necessity of understanding the Qur'an and Islamic interpretations of the history and narratives of ancient Israel as part of the broader biblical tradition. The Calf narrative in the Qur'an, central to the qur'anic conception of the legacy of Israel and the status of the Jews of its own time, reflects a profound engagement with the biblical account in Exodus, as well as being informed by exegetical and parascriptural traditions in circulation in the Qur'an's milieu in Late Antiquity. The book also addresses the issue of Western approaches to the Qur'an, arguing that the historical reliance of scholars and translators on classical Muslim exegesis of scripture has led to misleading conclusions about the meaning of qur'anic episodes.

### Reviews

**Winner of the Award for Excellence in the Study of Religion: Textual Studies at the 2021 AAR Book Awards**

"...excellent study" -- Stephen J. Shoemaker, University of Oregon, *Church History*

"This fascinating and brilliant study traces the use and transformation of the episode of the Golden Calf (Exod. 32.1-35) in Judaism, Christianity and the Qur'an...This is an incredibly rich study that will set new standards for the exploration of biblical themes in the Qur'an." -- Ansem C. Hagedorn, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*

"Pregill's work provides an outstanding example of the uses to which comparison can be put when done seriously and on a small scale. While based on careful scholarship and responsible philological practice, his comfort with the material and the novelty of the analysis leads him to venture forth and make much

bolder claims about the nature of the Hebrew Bible and the Quran. The result is a textually rich and theoretically sophisticated work that, while closely focused on one base text, subsequently broaches much larger issues that deal with textuality, politics, and the nature of scholarship." -- 221 AAR Book Awards

"This monograph is one of the most comprehensive works to investigate the interpretation of the Golden Calf narrative, as it includes the full spectrum of Jewish, Christian and Muslim reception history." -- Abdulla Galadari, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*

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I have pursued three main goals in this book. First, despite its importance in the Jewish Tanakh, the Christian Old Testament, and the Muslim Qur'an, the episode of the Golden Calf has been conspicuously neglected in the history of biblical tradition, with only a handful of substantial studies being devoted to it in the past. Thus, I have sought to shed light on the narrative's significance by tracing its development from its literary and historical setting in ancient Israel and Second Temple Judaism through its subsequent contexts of reception and reinterpretation in Late Antiquity, culminating in the Qur'an and Islam.

Second, I have attempted to reverse the typical gradient of studies in the history of interpretation among the scriptural communities of the Western or "Abrahamic" religious traditions, in which the amount of attention paid to post-canonical elaborations of biblical narratives diminishes the further away from the putative "original source"—the canonical Hebrew Bible—one gets. Whereas the Qur'an's versions of episodes from Israelite history have often been marginalized as afterthoughts in comparative studies, I have made the qur'anic presentation of the Calf episode central to this book. In my view, the Qur'an's portrayal of the affair is hardly marginal to the overarching history of the episode, but rather represents a vital and consequential retelling of the events at Sinai that is just as worthy of scholarly

attention as the biblical account of Exodus, which the Qur'an reformulates, renovates, and essentially re-reveals to its audience.

Finally, I have tried to demonstrate the necessity of exploring both the history of biblical tradition generally and qur'anic biblical narratives specifically in the broadest possible perspective. I have thus located the Qur'an's rewriting of the ancient Israelite narrative in a long trajectory of interpretations and retellings spanning more than a thousand years, focusing in particular on the subtle ways the concerns and imperatives that drove previous generations of exegetes are manifest in the Qur'an's portrayal of the events at Sinai. It is hoped that this book may serve to encourage more theoretically and contextually sensitive studies of qur'anic narrative, as well as more ecumenical and broad-ranging approaches to biblical tradition on the whole.

Hopefully, this book also demonstrates why locating the Qur'an in its late antique milieu is indispensable for an historical-critical approach to the corpus. The case of the qur'anic Calf episode serves particularly well as an example of how historical Western scholarship has brought a host of misconceptions and misperceptions to the study of qur'anic narratives—a set of questionable predispositions and biases propagated over the course of centuries, often unwittingly. Specifically, Western scholars since the time of Geiger have often viewed the qur'anic Calf—as well as a host of other biblical themes and narrative complexes found in the scripture—as a recapitulation of midrashic traditions passively received by Muhammad from his Jewish informants.

Somewhat paradoxically, this view has been informed both by polemical views of Islam inherited from medieval ecclesiastical tradition and by a pervasive reliance on classical Muslim commentary. In the case of the Golden Calf, the role of the tafsir tradition in reshaping the qur'anic narrative in dramatic ways has been wholly overlooked and unappreciated because modern scholars still often view the Qur'an from within the confines of the tafsir tradition itself—Western scholarship having been so deeply conditioned by dependence on Muslim commentary that until very recently the former has functioned practically as an extension of the latter. We might recall Patricia Crone's famous statement that much of the research on Islamic origins before the advent of revisionism in the 1970s simply rehearsed the methods and reiterated the conclusions of traditional Muslim scholarship without adding anything new: "Muslim chronicles in modern languages and graced with modern titles." This truism about historiography seems to apply to hermeneutics as well.

The example of Samiri, the "Samaritan," allows us to see quite clearly the strange tension between hostility and dependence that shaped medieval and early modern European scholarship on Islam: the qur'anic Calf episode was often viewed through the lens of tafsir, with the odd consequence that the Muslim commentary tradition was appropriated and redeployed to confirm Christian understandings—or rather, polemical distortions—of the Qur'an. Some scholars of the seventeenth and eighteenth century questioned the identification of the maker of the Calf as a Samaritan interloper, or in rare cases simply displaced him from the Qur'an in favor of identifying this figure as Aaron—anticipating, however remotely, the argument I have made here in this book. These early scholars were perhaps more willing than later generations to see the qur'anic Calf episode as more proximate to the precursor in Exodus, although this perception was shaped by explicitly negative attitudes about Islam, and in particular a view of the Qur'an as a distortion of biblical truth.

However, the majority of later Western interpreters of the qur'anic Calf narrative accepted the role that the classical Muslim exegetes had assigned Samiri; this reflects perhaps their greater awareness of and engagement with the commentary tradition, though not necessarily greater sensitivity in approach or more sympathy for Islam, Muslims, or the Qur'an. But by embracing the identification of al-samiri as "the Samaritan," they thereby sidelined Aaron in the narrative, minimizing his significance and effacing the qur'anic episode's profound links to its biblical and late antique precursors.

In the medieval European context, the image of the Samaritan interloper and his animate Golden Calf appears to have undergone a further peculiar metamorphosis, in the guise of a tale about Muhammad ensnaring his Saracen followers with a fabricated miracle in which he summoned a white bull to appear before them with the Qur'an suspended between its horns. Suzanne Akbari has characterized this scene as both relying on an image of Muhammad as charlatan and false prophet and alluding to the Golden Calf, but we can perhaps go further and recognize in this tableau an evocation of Samiri, the arch-idolater of Sinai from the tafsir, now polemically projected onto the Messenger of God himself.

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Scholarly attempts to investigate shared scriptural narratives have seldom managed to examine both the broad contours of their development over centuries (or millennia) and the subtler ways in which social, political, and religious contexts, especially intercommunal relations, shape interpretation. Further, despite its importance as the single most representative portrayal of idolatry in both the Bible and the Qur'an, it is a strange fact that the Golden Calf story has never been the subject of a comprehensive comparative treatment that incorporates Jewish, Christian, and Islamic material. This is especially surprising given that the episode demonstrates with virtually unparalleled clarity how fundamental concepts that Jews, Christians, and Muslims share in common such as chosenness, covenant, transgression, and authority can be articulated through narrative and exegesis, as well as the way in which the competing claims of rival communities converge in the interpretation of shared stories.

Bori's classic study *The Golden Calf and the Origins of the Anti-Jewish Controversy* provides a critical starting point for understanding the nexus of theology, exegesis, and polemic that coalesces in the early Christian interpretation of the Calf narrative. However, Bori's work fails to adequately capture the contours and trajectory of historical development of the narrative in Late Antiquity, given his relatively limited textual sample (mainly classical patristic literature and a small corpus of comparanda from rabbinic tradition), as well as his emphasis on thematic parallels rather than historical progression. Lindqvist's more recent study *Sin at Sinai* focuses upon early Jewish material on the Calf, from the Second Temple period to the early rabbis; along with the material found in the canonical Hebrew Bible, these texts have received the greatest amount of scholarly attention in the past. Lindqvist's work is a deliberate response to the widely held assumption that Jewish exegetes were predominantly concerned with fending off polemical attacks against Jewish communities based on the biblical portrayal of the Calf episode. Though we can readily appreciate the desire to restore agency and autonomy to exegetes of the Second Temple and early rabbinic periods that lies behind Lindqvist's emphasis on internal communal considerations as driving shifts in interpretation, his depreciation of the role of external interlocutors in motivating such shifts creates the unfortunate impression that Jewish communities were largely insulated from larger cultural patterns, perceptions, and concerns. Further, the historical moment that Bori and Lindqvist focus upon really represents only the earliest phase of a much longer diachronic coevolution of traditions. Until now, most of the textual evidence pertaining to understandings of the



Calf narrative from Late Antiquity to the Qur'an and early Islam has either been completely ignored or else been the subject only of brief inquiries, viewed in isolation from larger frameworks of meaning.

Besides rectifying the historical neglect of a massive amount of important literary material, another major goal of this book is addressing the chronic misrepresentation of the Qur'an—and sometimes all of Islamic tradition—as the product of a passive reception of influences channeled from other, more literate communities. Historically, scholarship investigating the Qur'an's literary precursors and parallels has portrayed the Prophet and early Muslims as "borrowing" ideas from their more scripturally learned betters, especially the Jewish groups in their immediate environment. Discomfort with the reductionist implications—if not overtly political agenda—of such an approach is one of the main reasons that academic investigation of the Qur'an's Jewish and Christian background fell out of fashion for decades. The most potent antidote to the once-ubiquitous emphasis on themes of dependency and derivation is to demonstrate how the Qur'an and early Muslims were not passive recipients of "influences," but rather well-informed, active participants in complex processes of identity formation through narrative reshaping that were characteristic of their time. Their reinterpretations of biblical narratives are part of, embedded in, the continued unfolding of biblical tradition in the later first and second millennium CE.

Thankfully, much contemporary scholarship on the Qur'an now avoids this reductionist and even polemical approach of the past. Continuing this vein of inquiry, this book is intended to model an approach to the shared biblical-qur'anic legacy that turns not on a concept of passively absorbed influences—what one scholar has called the "debtor-creditor" approach—but rather on that of long-term trajectories of development that unite the perennially fruitful (and perpetually fractious) Jewish, Christian, and Muslim reimaginings of the legacy of Israel.' My hope is not only to contribute to this ongoing project—one that has proven so productive for the field of Qur'anic Studies in recent years—but also to demonstrate why the study of the Qur'an and Islamic tradition matters for scholars in other fields such as Biblical Studies, late antique Judaism and Christianity, and the newly flourishing, increasingly ecumenical study of the intertwined religious traditions of the First Millennium.

## Overview of chapters

Chapter 1 establishes the historical and methodological framework for this book. Subsequently, the book is arranged into three discrete but interdependent parts. The first part, "Foundations," deals with the most ancient traditions on the Calf episode, beginning with the Israelite narratives that eventually became the basis of the account in the book of Exodus in the canonical Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament, and proceeding to the oldest extant traditions of Jewish interpretation of the story. The second part, "Jews, Christians, and the Contested Legacy of Israel," charts the significant ongoing dialogue between these communities on the status of the Israelite covenant and the identity of the true chosen people as it was refracted through the prism of the Golden Calf story. Understanding the broad contours of exegetical approaches to the narrative in the Near East in Late Antiquity is crucial as background for the third part, "The Qur'anic Calf Episode." Here we will examine trends in exegesis and narrative reimagining in two very different contexts, the late antique setting in which the Qur'an was revealed and the medieval and modern settings in which Western reception of and scholarship on the Qur'an was shaped.

Part I: Foundations. Chapter 2 examines the main narrative of the Golden Calf found in Exodus 32, as well as other allusions to this episode from Israel's history that are preserved in what became the

canonical Hebrew Bible. Here, we introduce major themes that will resonate throughout the rest of the book, especially insofar as the account of the Calf in Exodus appears to have been profoundly shaped by polemical imperatives in the earliest stages of its development. Rather than presenting a unified picture of the Calf affair, the versions of the episode preserved in different parts of the Pentateuch reflect profoundly different perspectives on the matter. While the Exodus narrative ultimately harkens back to a time in Israel's history in which the making of the Calf was perceived primarily as a lamentable cultic infraction, the reframing of the narrative in Deuteronomy embeds it in a larger discourse in which the making of the Calf appears as the pre-eminent example of idolatry, a distinctive ideological construction of the exilic and post-exilic period.

Just as narratives on the Calf in the canonical biblical accounts are already deeply colored by polemical concerns, the earliest "post-biblical" traditions on the narrative (found in texts outside of and responding to those canonized in the Pentateuch and other parts of what eventually became "our" Bible) are already deeply colored by apologetic concerns. Chapter 3 traces the development of early Jewish interpretation of the Calf episode from authors of the late Second Temple period to the emergence of distinctive midrashic readings of the narrative collected in classic works of rabbinic literature from Late Antiquity. Major shifts in interpretation can be charted over the course of a few short centuries here due to rapid changes in the cultural and religious landscape. The earliest Jewish interpretations of the Calf episode, dating to the late Second Temple era, are primarily concerned to minimize the impact of attacks on the Jewish community and its traditions from gentile outsiders. Early rabbinic exegetes, in contrast, are relatively candid about Israel's sin with the Calf. However, the promotion of stridently anti-Jewish readings of the narrative by the early Christian movement, especially after Christianity's establishment as an imperial religion, would compel Jewish exegetes to adopt new apologetic interpretations that were more imaginative, as well as more evasive, concerning the issue of the culpability of both Aaron and the Israelite community for their deed at Sinai.

Part II Jews, Christians, and the Contested Legacy of Israel. In Chapter 4, we turn to the emergence of specific anti-Jewish readings of the Calf episode in patristic literature. Virtually from the outset, the early Christian movement made use of the Calf narrative as proof of the disconfirmation of the formerly chosen Israel—the remnants of whom they saw manifest in the Jewish community of their day—in favor of the Christian Church, positioned as the True Israel and new chosen people. Early Christian exegetes strove to emphasize the illegitimacy of the Jews' continuing claim to covenantal priority, but this effort was tempered by the necessity of validating Israel's historical relationship with the Deity and the authenticity of the Bible (which included post-Sinaitic prophecy) as true revelation. Notably, these exegetes' understanding of the significance of Israel's idolatry with the Calf often appears to reflect an awareness of older Jewish approaches to the story. In turn, the major revisions of the episode seen in later rabbinic tradition can be read as direct responses to the promotion of specific anti-Jewish themes in patristic literature; the diverse claims about the Calf episode preserved in rabbinic collections reflect a host of approaches to the problem of the apparent schism between Israel and God caused by the worship of the Calf. Despite the mutual opposition and hostility expressed by spokesmen of both communities, a basic symmetry, even symbiosis, between Jewish and Christian traditions is characteristic of this phase of development of accounts of Israel's making of the Calf.

Chapter 5 examines a unique corpus of material in Syriac that reflects a synthesis of older patristic views of the Calf episode with specific themes that seem to have circulated widely in the Eastern Christian

milieu, shared in common between communities of Jewish and Christian exegetes in this period. While continuing the tradition of anti-Jewish arguments predicated on the abiding impact of Israel's sin with the Calf, authors such as Ephrem, Aphrahat, and Jacob of Serugh also developed a unique view of Aaron that dictated a more apologetic position regarding his particular culpability; this precisely paralleled the development of similar views of Aaron in Jewish tradition. Given these Syriac Christian authors' social proximity to Jews and the much-discussed cultural affinity of their distinctive brand of Christianity with contemporary strands of Judaism, this material provides us with a particularly compelling case through which to examine the phenomenon of exegetical approaches that are held in common by different communities, yet deployed for opposite purposes. Beyond the general theological, social, and ideological imperatives operative in these Syriac Christian authors' works, it is also possible that there was a specific historical context to the polemic they advanced based on the Calf narrative, given recent research pointing to a contemporary revival of priestly leadership—symbolic or actual—in late antique Palestine.

Part III: The Qur'anic Calf Episode. Chapter 6 introduces the Qur'anic Golden Calf episode as it is traditionally interpreted in both Muslim exegesis and in Western scholarship. Jewish and Christian debates over the meaning of the Calf story provide the essential background for understanding the Qur'an's unique approach to the Calf episode; however, this background has never been fully appreciated or explored in historical scholarship on the narrative. We will show that Western scholars have almost always relied upon the explanation of the episode in Muslim exegesis, the tafsir tradition, misunderstanding the role that early Muslim commentators played in introducing a radical revision of the story that was quite different in major details from the account found in the Qur'an itself. This can be demonstrated by examining historical translations of the Qur'an in the West, beginning with some of the earliest translations and commentaries of the medieval and early modern periods in Europe. In the specific case of the Calf narrative, Western scholars' reliance on tafsir has typically been motivated not by a desire to validate the claims of Muslim authorities, but rather by the assumption that Islam is at its root thoroughly dependent upon Judaism—a presupposition informed initially by medieval ecclesiastical polemic against Islam and subsequently by the influence paradigm introduced by Geiger's groundbreaking work on the Qur'an. This assumption has colored not only the overarching approach to the Qur'anic narrative per se, but also the characterization of a number of midrashic traditions found in the rabbinic corpus that have been cited as the sources of that narrative.

In Chapter 7, we will re-examine major aspects of the Qur'anic story, proposing a reading of the narrative that breaks with those of both traditional Muslim and Western scholarship and seeks to restore it to its proper historical, religious, and literary context in Late Antiquity. The Qur'anic references to the image worshipped by the Israelites as *'ijl jasad lahu khuwárun*, that is, a lowing image of a calf (literally a calf, a body that lowed or that "possesses lowing," 7:148/20:88) provided Muslim exegetes with a pretext for depicting the Calf as alive or at least possessing some semblance of life. However, we will argue that the Qur'anic Calf is better understood not as a lowing image of a calf but rather as an image of a lowing calf, a distinction of enormous significance for the exegesis of the story. In the absence of a conception of the Golden Calf as actually or seemingly animate, the Qur'an's allusions to al sámiri's creation of this entity must be reinterpreted as well. We will thus propose alternative explanations of the major elements of the traditional portrayal of the narrative, especially the depiction of the "Samaritan" as an outside interloper who created and animated the Calf through supernatural means, with Moses subsequently imposing a sentence of exile on both Samiri and his descendants, the Samaritan community, for all time. We will propose instead that the major elements of the key passage

in the Qur'an can be interpreted as allusions to various biblical subtexts, and that the qur'anic story originally posited, like its Jewish and Christian precursors, that it was Aaron who had made the Calf and led the Israelites into sin—the Qur'an's unique contribution to the development of biblical tradition here being Aaron's portrayal as al-sámir<sup>^</sup>, an epithet that identifies him as the inventor of the calf worship of biblical Samaria. Overall, judging by consistent parallels in structure, imagery, and linguistic expression, the Calf narrative of Surah 20 appears to reflect a profound, subtle, and intentional engagement with the Golden Calf story as it is known to us today from the book of Exodus, reshaped according to certain exegetical predispositions anticipated by older late antique Jewish and Christian interpretations of the story. In Chapter 8, we will discuss these findings in the context of both the Qur'an's relationship to its literary precursors and the Calf narrative's particular points of resonance with other themes and topoi in the qur'anic corpus. Though the term is a problematic one, we will consider the Qur'an's novel treatment of the Calf story as an example of "rewritten Bible," a reshaping of an older scriptural story that is not only a reimagining but in some ways a re-revelation of a narrative with a considerable—and considerably freighted—history in previous scriptural tradition. We will also consider a possible context for the qur'anic presentation of the Calf narrative, particularly its subordination of Aaron as priest to Moses as prophet, in the conflict that traditional Muslim sources describe between Muhammad and the Jews of Medina after the hijra. At the same time, our interpretation must take into account the possible significance of central themes of the story such as transgression, repentance, and authority for the Qur'an's original audience, the community of Believers, at a transformative moment in their history. <>

## **CREATING THE QUR'AN: A HISTORICAL-CRITICAL STUDY** by Stephen J. Shoemaker [University of California Press, 9780520389038]

**CREATING THE QUR'AN** presents the first systematic historical-critical study of the Qur'an's origins, drawing on methods and perspectives commonly used to study other scriptural traditions. Demonstrating in detail that the Islamic tradition relates not a single attested account of the holy text's formation, Stephen J. Shoemaker shows how the Qur'an preserves a surprisingly diverse array of memories regarding the text's early history and its canonization. To this he adds perspectives from radiocarbon dating of manuscripts, the linguistic history of Arabic, the social and cultural history of late ancient Arabia, and the limitations of human memory and oral transmission, as well as various peculiarities of the Qur'anic text itself. Considering all the relevant data to present the most comprehensive and convincing examination of the origin and evolution of the Qur'an available, Shoemaker concludes that the canonical text of the Qur'an was most likely produced only around the turn of the eighth century.

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...As religious studies expanded its footprint in American universities after the Second World War, the focus on studying and teaching “good” religion persisted and was applied equally to non-Christian traditions as they increasingly became objects of study. It remained the case that “true religion, then, is epistemologically and ethically singular. It is rational, respectful of persons, noncoercive, mature, nonanthropomorphic in its higher forms, mystical (as opposed to ritualistic), unmediated and agreeable to democracy (no hierarchy in gilded robes and fancy hats), monotheistic (no angels, saints, demons, ancestors), emotionally controlled, a reality of mind and spirit not body and matter.” Orsi’s own scholarship has continuously challenged us to break this mold, drawing attention to highly popular and fascinating aspects of Roman Catholic piety that do not fit this paradigm. Religion, at its root, Orsi helpfully clarifies, “has nothing to do with morality.” While this may come as a shock to many modern scholars and believers alike, historically it is true. Indeed, “Religion is often enough cruel and dangerous, and the same impulses that result in a special kind of compassion also lead to destruction, often among the same people at the same time. Theories of religion have largely served as a protection against such truths about religion.” Therefore, students of religion are not entitled to look down their noses at Christian snake handlers or devout Catholics who fill their cars’ radiators with holy water as if their beliefs and practices were somehow not “real” or “true” religion. By the same token, scholars of religious studies must refuse to accept essentializations of “true” Islam that would exclude from legitimacy any expressions of Islam, no matter how unsavory they may be to liberal Western tastes. For the historian of religion, violent and hateful expressions of religion are no less legitimate and deserving of study that those that advance peace and love.

Of course, the present study is not at all concerned with determining exactly what constitutes “real” or “true” Islam: that is something for faithful Muslims to debate among themselves, not something for specialists in religious studies to decide. I would never dare to pronounce on what true Islam is today, no more than I would for Christianity, particularly for those who practice it. Nevertheless, I do claim warrant to speak on behalf of the religious movement that Muhammad began and that developed over the course of the seventh century to lay the foundations of the faith tradition that we now call Islam. This “Believers” movement that Muhammad founded is simply not to be equated with contemporary Islam, in any of its expressions, any more than one would foolishly profess that Christianity today is identical with the faith of Jesus and his initial followers. Contemporary Muslims may of course believe and insist that their faith is indistinguishable and unchanged from the religious movement that Muhammad established in the seventh century. Yet any such claim, essential though it may be to Islamic self-identity, is theological and ideological and not historical. Therefore, while Muslims speaking within their tradition and in their faith communities are certainly justified in collapsing the two, the historian of religion must instead recognize and bring to light the numerous profound differences in these religious formations. With this in mind, we will approach the Qur’an as a historical artifact independent of the contemporary Islamic tradition and as a product instead of the diverse religious cultures of western Asia

in late antiquity. In this regard we follow in the footsteps of Jonathan Z. Smith, who rightly avers that “the historian of religion . . . accepts neither the boundaries of canon nor of community in constituting his intellectual domain.” Likewise, for the historian of religion “there is no privilege to myth or other religious materials. They must be understood primarily as texts in context, specific acts of communication between specified individuals, at specific points in time and space, about specifiable subjects.”

In contrast to the missteps of many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century “Orientalists,” our approach decidedly does not seek to paint Islam as an other of the Christian West. Instead, our aim is to compare the beginnings of Islam with the related Near Eastern monotheisms in the Abrahamic tradition that arose from the same context. Our study advocates substantial continuity, rather than difference, between Islam and these traditions. Likewise, in a sharp distinction from the “Orientalist” tendency to cast Islam as something exotic or eccentric, we find early Islam instead to be a movement that is engaged with and similar to the other monotheisms of late antiquity—rather than a new religion that emerged spontaneously from the cultural seclusion of the Hijaz. We also reject the tendency to flatten or homogenize the Islamic tradition, evident equally in “orientalist” scholarship and in more recent works published by scholars of Middle Eastern studies and Islamic religious studies—referring to the latter category particularly in the sense defined by Hughes. To the contrary, we aim to unearth the buried complexity and diversity evidenced in the new religious movement founded by Muhammad and his followers. Accordingly, our presentation of Islam is decidedly not a “static system of essentialism” with little social and historical flux; nor do we expect that its adherents largely agree with one another on most things, with little historical or geographical variation. In each case, then, this study seeks to move the investigation of Islam away from the classic mistakes and misrepresentations of nineteenth-century “orientalism” as identified by Edward Said.

Our approach to understanding the earliest history of the Qur’an and its composition stands within the methodological tradition of religious studies often known as “naturalism,” a term seemingly first coined by J. Samuel Preus. This paradigm views religious culture as a phenomenon that can and should, contra W. C. Smith,

be understood without benefit of clergy—that is, without the magisterial guidance of religious authorities—and, more radically, without “conversion” or confessional and/or metaphysical commitments about its causes different from the assumptions one might use to understand and explain other realms of culture. . . . It is not necessary to believe in order to understand—indeed, . . . suspension of belief is probably a condition for understanding.

The term “naturalism” is admittedly not entirely ideal, since it could imply a claim to reveal “what is or is not natural, normative, and acceptable” about religion. Perhaps, then, it would be better to speak instead of this approach as “mundane” and “immanent,” in contrast to understandings of religion that privilege personal, interior responses to the transcendent and the sacred. Russ McCutcheon further clarifies the “naturalist” approach as being guided by two main principles: “(1) the assumption that scholars carry out their work in the sociohistorical world, and (2) the assumption that the categories and concepts scholars routinely employ to describe and account for the world are equally natural products with not only a history but also material implications.”<sup>38</sup> The mundane or immanent approach to religious culture therefore refrains from positing any supernatural phenomena or explanations, and it rejects the idea that religious phenomena are somehow *sui generis* so that they cannot be understood

and explained using the same methods regularly employed for studying other aspects of culture and society. From the naturalist perspective, religion exists as an integral part of human social and cultural history and therefore may and must be studied as such, rather than through appeals to personal, private experiences of some sort of ineffable transcendent or “the Holy.”

In studying a modern religious community, a naturalist approach might employ the tools of sociological and economic analysis in order to better understand the phenomena in view. Yet in a case such as ours, which deals with religious culture at a distance of many centuries, an approach using the various tools of historical criticism seems more appropriate. And so we position ourselves, again, squarely within the larger tradition of Religionsgeschichte, the history of religions. We take as a foundation for our study the thirteen essential “theses on method” for the history of religions as laid down by Bruce Lincoln, theses that give particularly clear expression to the underlying principles of this method. Although Lincoln was himself a product of Eliade’s Chicago school and was even his student, Lincoln soon came to rather different conclusions about religion from his mentor, rejecting the approach in which he was trained for both its essentialism and its inability to challenge critically the ideological power of religion in culture and society. In order to give readers a better idea of the basis for our approach, we quote below several of the most salient theses posed by Lincoln, particularly since I suspect that both they and the approach to religion that they outline may not be altogether familiar to many scholars trained in Islamic studies.

1. The same destabilizing and irreverent questions one might ask of any speech act ought to be posed of religious discourse. The first of these is “Who speaks here?”, i.e., what person, group, or institution is responsible for a text, whatever its putative or apparent author. Beyond that, “To what audience? In what immediate and broader context? Through what system of mediations? With what interests?” And further, “Of what would the speaker(s) persuade the audience? What are the consequences if this project of persuasion should happen to succeed? Who wins what, and how much? Who, conversely, loses?”
2. Reverence is a religious, and not a scholarly virtue. When good manners and good conscience cannot be reconciled, the demands of the latter ought to prevail.
3. Many who would not think of insulating their own or their parents’ religion against critical inquiry still afford such protection to other people’s faiths, via a stance of cultural relativism. One can appreciate their good intentions, while recognizing a certain displaced defensiveness, as well as the guilty conscience of western imperialism.
4. Beyond the question of motives and intentions, cultural relativism is predicated on the dubious—not to say, fetishistic—construction of “cultures” as if they were stable and discrete groups of people defined by the stable and discrete values, symbols, and practices they share. Insofar as this model stresses the continuity and integration of timeless groups, whose internal tensions and conflicts, turbulence and incoherence, permeability and malleability are largely erased, it risks becoming a religious and not a historic narrative: the story of a transcendent ideal threatened by debasing forces of change.
5. Those who sustain this idealized image of culture do so, inter alia, by mistaking the dominant fraction (sex, age group, class, and/or caste) of a given group for the group or “culture” itself. At the same time, they mistake ideological positions favoured and propagated by the dominant fraction for those of the group as a whole (e.g. when texts authored by Brahmins define “Hinduism”, or when the statements of male elders constitute “Nuer religion”). Scholarly

misrecognitions of this sort replicate the misrecognitions and misrepresentations of those the scholars privilege as their informants.

In following this path, this book will make use of a wide range of methods and perspectives with broad currency in the humanities, social sciences, and even the natural sciences, tools that are regularly used to analyze and understand the panoply of human social and cultural phenomena. In the first two chapters, we will investigate the diverse reports concerning the Qur'an's composition that have come down to us from the earliest written sources, noting especially the confusion and contradictions of these reports. I should note that in speaking of the Qur'an's "composition," a term that I will regularly use in this study, I do not mean to suggest the Qur'an's creation out of thin air at some given point. Nevertheless, I do intend for readers to understand by such language that the production of a new version of the Qur'anic text is in view, and not just a passive collection of already long-established writings. Nor should we have in mind mere cosmetic adjustments to an already fixed text, such as adding textual divisions or diacritical marks, as we think about the process of producing the canonical Qur'an during the middle and later seventh century. Therefore, I deliberately choose the term "composition" to signal that this process involves more than the mere compilation of textual material that has already been fixed into a certain form, as if one were merely stringing together well-established textual traditions. On the basis of the available historical evidence, we conclude that the Qur'an's final composition into the canonical form that has come down to us today seems to have taken place around the turn of the eighth century under the direction of the caliph ^Abd al-Malik (r. 685–705) and his viceroy al-Hajjāj ibn Yūsuf. This tradition not only holds the most consistency with the range of our available evidence, including the gradual development of the caliphal state, but it is also the most broadly attested account of the Qur'an's origins across the various sources relevant to this question.

I wish to be clear at the outset, however, that while it does in fact seem that we owe the unvarying and canonical version of the Qur'an to the actions of ^Abd al-Malik and al-Hajjāj, their ultimate imposition of this imperial standard certainly is not the whole story. On the one hand, then, our focus on the tradition of their decisive intervention in the text of the Qur'an flows from genuine conviction in its historical significance. Yet on the other hand, it is also partly strategic, affording an extremely useful foil for countering the ossified credence in the canonical Sunni narrative of the Qur'an's composition—particularly as rearticulated by Nöldeke and Schwally—that has stultified progress in the academic study of the Qur'an's origins for over a century now. In bringing attention to the pivotal roles played by ^Abd al-Malik and al-Hajjāj in establishing the canonical Qur'an, I do not at all propose to close off the possibility and importance of earlier collections or earlier efforts at closure or partial closure of the canonical text. On the contrary, it is hoped that instead the positions argued in this study will open up space for proposing and discussing more complex and nuanced understandings of the Qur'an's formation across the expanse of the seventh century. The primary goal of this study, then, is not so much to provide closure to questions about the Qur'an's origins around ^Abd al-Malik's imperial vulgate, but rather to open up a range of possibilities for thinking about how the Qur'an came to be.

In chapter 3, we turn to the issue of the radiocarbon dating of early Qur'anic manuscripts. Recently, a number of scholars have cited the results of these assays as if they have somehow definitively resolved the question of the Qur'an's creation, locating its composition in the later part of the caliph ^Uthmān's reign (during the early 650s), a position favored by the Islamic tradition generally and the Sunni tradition



especially. Nevertheless, a more careful analysis of the data from the radiometric analysis of these manuscripts belies this misplaced certainty, and in fact the early manuscripts and their radiocarbon datings, when properly understood, are most consistent with the canonical Qur'an's origins under ^Abd al-Malik. The fourth chapter considers the social, cultural, and economic conditions of Mecca and Medina in late antiquity, at least, insofar as they can be known: the available evidence for understanding the central Hijaz in this era is in fact strikingly meagre in comparison with other regions. Nevertheless, we can discern that both Mecca and the Yathrib oasis were very small and isolated settlements, of little cultural and economic significance—in short, hardly the sort of place one would expect to produce a complicated religious text like the Qur'an. Chapter 5 investigates the evidence currently available for understanding the Qur'an's linguistic context. Although we now have more inscriptions from the Arabian Peninsula in various forms of Arabic than ever before, it remains the case that during the lifetime of Muhammad, the peoples of the central Hijaz, which includes Mecca and Medina, were effectively nonliterate.

This conclusion means that we must understand the Qur'anic text for much of its early history as a fundamentally oral tradition that was recited from memory and passed along primarily through oral transmission for several decades. Accordingly, the sixth and seventh chapters bring to bear on the Qur'an perspectives from memory science and the anthropological study of oral cultures and oral transmission respectively. The knowledge derived from these two disciplines leads us to conclude with some certainty that, if the Qur'an were indeed circulating orally for decades, as seems to have been the case, then we must understand the Qur'an as a text that remained in a constant state of composition and recomposition as its traditions were told and retold—and modified and amplified—during their transmission by Muhammad's followers in the decades after his death. Chapter 8, then, considers the impact and the process of the transition to a written text. Generally, the conversion of an oral tradition to a written one is not sudden but gradual, involving numerous stages and multiple editions along the way to a finished product. Nevertheless, even as the tradition shifts to a written medium, the influence of oral tradition on the written remains strong, and written collections themselves remain subject to significant change until a text becomes canonized and its contents are subject to a level of policing by authorities.

In the final chapter we look to the Qur'an itself for clues regarding the circumstances in which it was produced, and there we find abundant evidence that it often addresses a milieu that is simply not compatible with the central Hijaz during the early seventh century. Indeed, the Qur'an itself, as we are left to conclude, affirms the indications of the historical tradition, the social and linguistic history of the Arabian Peninsula, memory science, and the study of oral tradition to reveal a text that was in large part composed—during the process of its oral transmission—outside the Hijaz. Although much of the Qur'an's content was presumably inspired by Muhammad's teachings to his followers in Mecca and Medina—as these teachings were remembered and re-remembered by his followers over decades, its content was also heavily influenced and, in many instances, directly inspired by the formation of its traditions within the sectarian milieu of the late ancient Near East. This recognition should lead to a profound reorientation in how scholars seek to understand the text of the Qur'an within the historical context that gave it birth. <>

## THE SEMANTICS OF QUR'ANIC LANGUAGE: AL-ĀḤIRA by Ghassan el Masri [Series: Texts and Studies on the Qur ān, Brill, 9789004427990]

In **THE SEMANTICS OF QUR'ANIC LANGUAGE: AL-ĀḤIRA**, Ghassan el Masri offers a semantic study of the concept al-āḥira 'the End' in the Qur ān. The study is prefaced with a detailed account of the late antique concept of etymologia (Semantic Etymology). In his work, he demonstrates the necessity of this concept for appreciating the Qur ān's rhetorical strategies for claiming discursive authority in the Abrahamic theological tradition. The author applies the etymological tool to his investigation of the theological significance of al-āḥira, and concludes that the concept is polysemous, and tolerates a large variety of interpretations. The work is unique in that it draws extensively on Biblical material and presents a plethora of pre-Islamic poetry verses in the analysis of the concept.

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لَا تَجْعَلُ الْكَلِمَةَ سَمًا مِّثْلَ نَبَاتٍ ثَمَرُهُ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ بَلَدٍ بَنِيهِ أَشْجَارُهُ تَوَاتُرًا

Have you not considered how God has struck a similitude? A good word is the likeness of a good tree—its roots are firm, and its branches are in heaven. Sūrat Ibrāhīm 14:24

The different etymological methodologies—historical or semantic—that scholars apply for interpreting the meanings of the terms of the Qur ān, have fundamental epistemological consequences on how the history of the event of the Qur ān is narrated and above all, on our understanding of its theological premises. Etymology is essentially an etiological account; it is as much an account of the origin of the *name* as much as it is an account of essence of the *thing* so-called. Traditional Muslim scholars can only agree to this sort of claim. One sees this directly in Islam's emphasis on the original Arabicity of its scripture, which became a matter of doctrine and part of the epistemic identity and theological character of the canon. One need only observe the foundational role that Arabic semantic etymology (*al-aṣl*) plays in determining the meaning (*ma'nā*) and definition (*ḥadd*) of Islamic concepts. All of the core Arab-Islamic linguistic sciences were engaged in etymology, *ilm al-luġa* (lexicography), *al-iṣṭiqāq* (derivation) and *taṣrīf* (morphology) determine the very nature of the concept in exegesis (*tafsīr*),

theology (*‘ilm al-kalām*), the science of the methodology of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) and jurisprudence (*fiqh*). A case for illustration: the etymology that is given for a word like *zakāt* by Muslim scholars and lexicographers, i.e. ‘purification’ and ‘growth’, speaks for the rest of the religious sciences that inevitably deal with and interpret the concept of *zakāt* and transform it into the social reality of the institution of *zakāt*. For a Muslim, to perform *zakāt* is ‘to purify her property and engender its growth’. For Muslim theology, Etymology is an etiological account of the religious concept; it defines the essence of its meaning in religious practice as well as its social interpretation.

The Islamic sciences were not unique in their extensive use of etymology, which was central to late antique epistemology in general and fundamentally underlies literary and exegetical sciences and practices in the Jewish, Christian and pagan worlds. Rarely do medieval commentators speak of a concept before first giving an account of the origin of the name, and by so doing, they explicate what they think is the essential nature of the thing so-called. This is equally true for the Greek and Latin traditions as well as the Islamic tradition where the practice was used extensively in the case of the last as testified by the precocious birth—in the early second century AH—of the Arabic lexicographic tradition.<sup>1</sup> The Greek *étumon* that gives us ‘etymology’ means no less than ‘true’, ‘real’ and ‘genuine’. Learned men of the classical age like Diodorus and Plutarch used the substantive τ ῆ τιμον in the sense of “real meaning, original significance (of a word)” Now if we ask the question: Whence come Arab-Islamic etymologies? We find that their use as a source and instrument of *discursive authority* and a generator of religious meaning starts with the Qur ān and subsequently runs through the whole length of the tradition.

Since the 19th century, Biblical scholarship and historical philology have presented a new challenge to the Islamic etymological tradition and its inner understanding of Qur ānic terms and concepts. The challenge came in the form of historical philology and therefore historical etymology, which traces the meaning of the Arabic term to its roots outside the Arabic linguistic tradition: Semitic languages where the clear candidate by virtue of belonging to the same family of languages of which Arabic is a member. That, however, often by necessity, imported a Biblical or para-biblical dimension to the reading of the text. The historical variety of meaning, challenged the traditional Arabic meaning, sometimes convincingly, and vied vigorously for discursive authority over the interpretation of the text in the last century. Readers and students of the Qur ān are thereafter left to have to grapple with a tug-of-war of sorts between two grand authorities, each claiming the right to provide the meaning of the Qur ānic term. Each presenting formidable and persuasive sets of arguments, methodologies and raw lexical data to prove its point. The present study was motivated by this background of seemingly irreconcilable methodologies and hermeneutics and a desire to find a common ground.

The Qur ān recognizes itself as an extension, albeit in the form of a rectification or fulfilment, of the Biblical tradition. Thus the historical Biblical meaning of the terms that the Qur ān uses plays a defining role in tracing the semantic development of the Islamic concepts. The Qur ān, and not the work of early Arab grammarians is the original locus of the Arabizing process, as the first chapters will argue. This work’s novel contribution lies in using semantic and historical etymology combined with the Qur ān’s inner chronology and its ambient poetic milieu, to investigate—as a test case—the meanings of a central theological concept: *al-āhira*. Although this work is primarily an investigation in Qur ānic eschatology, it should equally serve as an experiment leading towards a historical theological lexicon for the Qur ān along the line of works covering the Greek,<sup>3</sup> Aramaic<sup>4</sup> and Hebrew<sup>5</sup> books of the Bible. The

choice of *al-āḥira* as a sample term was driven by the importance of this concept in the Islamic tradition in general and to Qur'anic eschatology in particular. Another aspect of the concept of *al-āḥira* that played a role in its choice is its inherent and self-evident historicity. As such, it is imperative, when investigating this concept in particular, that we examine the meaning of the term *before* the event of the Qur'an, and how it developed *during* the revelation. It is therefore necessary to survey the development of the historical meaning without forgoing the inner semantics of the Muslim canon. Theological analysis apart, the concrete philological questions to which this study seeks an answer are basic: What did the term mean in the process of the revelation of the Qur'an? How does this meaning relate to pre-existing Biblical homologues? Does it have more than one meaning?

This work has, therefore two tasks to complete, one being part of the other: first, develop a method for investigating the meaning of Qur'anic terms in context and apply it second, in a philological-cum-theological study to *al-āḥira*. The work is divided into three parts spread over ten chapters. The first part is in one chapter. It is a philological description and a historical justification of the etymological methodology of the study. *Chapter 2: Etymology, Historic and Semantic* builds upon the work of Goldziher and Izutsu and adapts their method of developing semantic fields and semantic etymologies for the terms they investigated (*kufr* and *ḡāhiliya* respectively). One adaptation that I apply to Izutsu's method of semantic fields involves the use of secular poetic sources for the study of the Qur'an. This leads to the problem of the generic difference, sometimes incompatibility, between scripture and ancient Arabic poetry and its effect on reading the Qur'an. This problem is treated in the section *Arabic Scripture*, where I make the argument that the interpretive problem that ensues from the text's readability in the space of Arabic literature (ancient Arabic poetry) on the one hand and the space of Scripture (including the Biblical tradition) on the other, can be mitigated through etymologizing, and that this has been the *de facto* solution of the first commentators. In the section *Old Practices*, I present the central place of etymologizing as a strategy of discursive authority and a tool for generating meaning in late antiquity. Etymologizing is used in the Qur'an as an exegetical strategy for reinterpreting the Bible and producing new meanings. This feature of the Qur'an's rhetoric and theological argumentation, I argue, is visible in the text itself, and was identified, and not invented, by the earliest Muslim philologists and commentators.

The second part of the work falls into two chapters. *Chapter 3: Arabian Terms and Notions* is a survey of fate-related terms in ancient Arab poetry, with an examination of their use, or lack thereof, in the Qur'an. In the first section I examine the use of some concepts in the language of the Qur'an by situating them in their poetic milieu and survey the differences in the way they are used in the two corpora. I then perform the reverse procedure of tracing Qur'anic concepts back to their poetic milieu and survey the differences in the way they are used in the two corpora. This is partly intended to examine the degree to which the vocabulary of the Qur'an intersects with the vocabulary of poetry, and to supplement our understanding of secular or pagan conceptions of time and fate common among the Arabs at the time. The individual sections within the chapter will cover terms common to poetry (*ḥamm*, *atāḥ*) but are absent in the Qur'an and were replaced with quasi-synonyms (*qarīb*, *a'add* respectively). It will also cover terms that are common to poetry and Qur'an however used in different meanings (*qadar*, *qaḍā'*). I end the section with the destiny-related notion (*al-manāya*) that is perhaps most common in poetry and was central to the Arabian worldview but is absent in the Qur'an, except for a single—ironic—occurrence (i.e. *al-manūn*). The chapter includes two excursuses both of

which are contextual demonstrations of how the lexical surveys can inform our interpretation of the sūra as a literary unit, the first is on *sūrat al-Anbiyā'* and the second on *sūrat al-Ḥāqqā*. The work includes five excurses in total; they are—hopefully informative—digressions from the main argument of the book, and can therefore be read separately.

*Chapter 4: Time between Beginning and End* explores concepts that were used in pre-Islamic poetry to define temporal spans, especially terms conveying notions of 'first' and 'last', or 'now' and 'beyond' (*awwal—āḥir, ad-dunyā—al-ba'ad*), the purpose is to identify correlation pairs that resemble in their usage the pair *dunyā/āḥira*. The section *Awwal / Āḥir—ad-Dahr, al-Ayyām ... al-Zamān* explores expressions that designate the notion of the 'beginning' and 'end' of 'time' or 'end of days'. The chapter closes with an in depth survey of derivatives of the root a-ḥ-r in ancient Arabic poetry. The purpose of the exercise is to collect the sources that contributed to the Arabic semantic etymology of the root and the meaning of the emerging notion of *al-āḥira* that directed how the prophet's community conceived and imagined its future as well as the rhetorical and theological strategies that were employed to realize it. Poetic substructures are present in the character of eschatological Islamic concepts as the former were transferred from pre-Islamic Biblical traditions. *Chapter 5: Biblical Vocabulary* is a survey of the Biblical expressions (Be' *aḥarit hayyamim*— וְהָיָה וְאָמַר וְאָמַר וְאָמַר and *Olam ha-ba'*— עוֹלָם הַבָּא ) and concepts ( *Eschatos—ἔσχατος* ) all of which pertain conceptually if not lexically to the Arabic *al-āḥira*. The chapter was based on lexical investigations conducted by Biblical scholars as well as results from my scan of different versions of the Bible in the Database program *BibleWorks*. The chapter closes with a theological overview of the different sorts of eschatological interpretations that have populated the discussion of Christian theologians and Jewish philosophers in the last century.

The third and last part of the study starts with *Chapter 6: The Qur'anic Shifts* and goes through the Qur'anic usages of the term *al-āḥira* as well as other derivatives of the root a-ḥ-r as they appear in the chronological order of revelation. These are closely analyzed in three *Chapters: 6 The Early, 7 Middle and 8 Late Meccan Periods*. This chapter is the practical application of the etymological method; it uses what has been learned about the semantic field of the root a-ḥ-r and other terms and expressions from the previous surveys of poetry and the biblical material. For the purpose, the chapter employs the inner structure of sūras and the chronological development of the Qur'an for a contextual analysis of each occurrence of the term. Other temporal concepts, narratives and discourses from poetry and scripture are equally used to explore the relation between the eschatological and the historical elements in the Qur'anic discourse on the 'End'. The chapter includes an excursus on *ad-dār al-āḥira* that appears late in the Qur'anic discourse, with an attempt to explicate its contextual function. *Chapter 9: The Medinan Developments* includes in addition to the investigation of the target term, a section on *al-Yaum al-āḥir*, which appears in the Qur'anic address to *ahl al-kitāb*, and ends with a lexical investigation of *ad-dunyā*. *ad-Dunyā* appears to be a Qur'anic neologism, or, at best, developed or gained currency in tandem with the event of the Qur'an, although it came to mean 'world' in the sense of 'here-and-now', its earliest uses in the prophetic address was to designate the facile human attachment to base (*danī*) concerns and proximate (*dānī*) short-term rewards.

The study concludes with a summary of two sets of observations, philological and theological: the observations on the interaction and transition between the language of poetry and the language of the Qur'an lead to the section on the role of semantic etymology in shaping the meaning of Qur'anic terms

and the construction of Islamic theological concepts through the process of Arabizing Biblical concepts as well as etymology's contribution to the process of theologizing secular Arabic literary motifs. The Qur'an is arguably the source of the etymological *Denkform*<sup>7</sup> ('mode of thinking') in the Arab cultural sphere. As can be seen from the subsequent developments in Islamic sciences, etymology played a crucial role in constructing the genealogical and intellectual origins of an Islamic theology, epistemology and ontology. These philological observations lead the way to a reflection upon their implications on our understanding of the theological and eschatological function of the concept *al-āhira* as well as the Qur'an's view of history and futurity. The Qur'an adopts a broad notion of eschatology, here better perhaps: 'teleology' to avoid a specific sort of Christian implications of the term. One may term the Qur'anic variety as 'Instantiated Eschatology', where *longue-durée* destiny-related and future-oriented existential and political considerations animated the zeal of the believers. 'Instantiated Eschatology' equally served to establish the *dispensation* of the Qur'an as the inlibration of the *Logos* and the establishment of the Last Covenant. The Qur'an, however, gives us no reason to believe that any form of strict universal eschatology was intended as imminent or theo-politically relevant for the prophet's own community. This *katechonic* function of the Last Covenant, however, rapidly eroded in the Umayyad period, where we have good evidence of an 'Apocalypse Now' approach to the management of the theo-politics of the war against the Roman Empire that includes many of the staple elements of Christian eschatological expectations (e.g. *al-masīḥ ad-dağğāl*, *nuzūl 'Īsā*, etc.) that are strikingly absent from the Qur'an. <> ā

## SUFISM IN CENTRAL ASIA: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON SUFI TRADITIONS, 15TH-21ST CENTURIES edited by Devin DeWeese and Jo-Ann Gross [Series: Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section 8 Uralic & Central Asian Studies, Brill, 9789004367876]

**SUFISM IN CENTRAL ASIA: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON SUFI TRADITIONS, 15TH-21ST CENTURIES** brings together ten original studies on historical aspects of Sufism in this region. A central question, of ongoing significance, underlies each contribution: what is the relationship between Sufism as it was manifested in this region prior to the Russian conquest and the Soviet era, on the one hand, and the features of Islamic religious life in the region during the Tsarist, Soviet, and post-Soviet eras on the other? The authors address multiple aspects of Central Asian religious life rooted in Sufism, examining interpretative strategies, realignments in Sufi communities and sources from the Russian to the post-Soviet period, and social, political and economic perspectives on Sufi communities.

Contributors include: Shahzad Bashir, Devin DeWeese, Allen Frank, Jo-Ann Gross, Kawahara Yayoi, Robert McChesney, Ashirbek Muminov, Maria Subtelny, Eren Tasar, and Waleed Ziad.

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The Princeton symposium of 2011 that prompted the preparation of the papers presented here was framed around new approaches to and perspectives on the study of Sufism in Central Asia, and marked a distinctive moment in the development of scholarship on that broad subject: the two decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union brought increasing recognition of the inadequacy of the assessment of Sufism in the Soviet context advanced by Alexandre Bennigsen and his followers, and also witnessed a substantial growth in scholarly explorations focused on the history of Sufi groups in Central Asia before the Russian conquest. The Princeton conference was intended to link those two directions, providing a historically-grounded perspective on the continuation, or revival, of Sufi currents in Central Asia since the late Soviet period, reassessing our understanding of Sufism during the Soviet era itself, and treating the history of Sufi communities in Central Asia as a connected phenomenon, with continuities linking developments from the 15th century to the present alongside broad historical shifts in organization and structure, rather than as separate phases shaped entirely by political circumstances and framed in terms of political history.

The key assumption underlying the symposium was that any attempt to understand the contemporary roles of Sufi groups would have to be based on a deep historical understanding of the sort that is still being built for this field; it was also taken for granted that diverse perspectives, reflecting sources, historical patterns, and specific structures of Sufi organization evident in different parts of Central Asia, would be crucial to prepare the ground for addressing the problem, as would a broad chronological framework, to help ensure that common or widespread trends and specific, perhaps even unique, developments would neither mask one another nor fail to be recognized. These assumptions, in turn, reflect (if inversely) the lingering impact of the views and approaches of the Bennigsen school on thinking about Sufism in Central Asia, which lacked historical understanding, failed to draw upon comparative perspectives from elsewhere in the Muslim world, and adopted a quite narrow chronological framework

for its focus—i.e., the Soviet era—which seemed open-ended in the early 1980s, but was soon provided with an end-point just 70-odd years later than its starting point.

With these goals and frameworks in mind, we may offer a few general remarks, by way of contextualizing the study of Sufism in Central Asia, in order to frame the specific contributions to the present volume. There are, after all, compelling reasons to study the history of Sufi traditions in Central Asia. The region was home to many of the early ‘foundational’ saints, celebrated throughout the Muslim world, who—whatever their actual historical affiliations—were incorporated into the ‘back-story’ devised for Sufism by the 10th century. Prominent Sufi writers who shaped Sufi teaching and literary expression were active in Central Asia, and if we include Khurasan within that broader regional label—as makes sense through much of history, in political and cultural terms—their numbers grow dramatically. Central Asia was the birthplace of major Sufi orders: the internationally important Naqshbandiyya, the regionally prominent Yasaviyya, and the widely influential Kubraviyya are the best known, but other groups less prominent than these (in Central Asia, at least), such as the Chishtīs or the Shaṭṭārīs, also had roots in the region.

Particular periods in Central Asian history, moreover, provided the backdrop for the formative stages of several of these Sufi communities and, later, for classic examples of competitive rivalries among multiple strong Sufi groups, reflecting their expanded social profiles. We likewise find important cases of the intimate involvement of Sufis in political and economic affairs, or of Sufi lineages claiming credit for distinct patterns of Islamization, their claims often masking a process that ought to be thought of more in terms of establishing networks of personal and communal allegiance than in terms of ‘preaching’ Islam or Sufi doctrine. It is the social context, indeed, and the creation of religiously-defined sub-communities that cross class and ethnic boundaries (and compete for various constituencies), that ought to be understood as underlying the broad reach, and appeal, of Sufism in Central Asia. In much of the post-Mongol era, that is, the social and intellectual manifestations of Sufism shaped literary production, healing cultures, kinship structures, and architectural legacies, whether the *khānaqāh* or shrine or *madrasa*, throughout Central Asia. Sufism, indeed, shaped religious language and the intellectual formation of the *‘ulamā*, but also ‘spoke to’ the religious lives of the inarticulate and illiterate. Sufism’s sources, moreover—above all hagiographical works—serve as an important window on social history, to balance the perspectives of court chronicles. The religious vision, or visions, they articulate played a role in shaping Central Asian society that was arguably more pervasive than that played by the voices of ‘reform’ or ‘modernity, certainly in ‘pre-modern’ or pre-Soviet times, but in large measure also in Soviet times and at present, below the surface of the elites and globalization.

More broadly, the structures and practices associated with Sufi history in the region offer an excellent vantage point from which to restore ‘religious life’ to historical inquiry, by way of moving beyond the unhelpful dichotomy that relegates ‘religion’ to a ‘pre-modern’ past, or to a narrow slice of human activity defined by scriptural minimums. Sufi history allows us not only to appreciate the religious visions that shape societies, but to understand the multiple social structures through which Sufism, or ‘religion’ more generally, intersects with social history. At the same time, as Sufism is made the focus of historical investigation, its students must take stock of what this “-ism” encompasses in different times and different social contexts. The usual short-hand definition of Sufism as “Islamic mysticism,” for instance, can interfere with recognizing its ethical, devotional, and communal dimensions, and with appreciating the ways in which both Sufi doctrine and Sufi social experience provide organizational and conceptual



foundations for individual and communal experience, shaping perception as well as modes of negotiating life in social and psychological terms. Understanding these dimensions, however, requires an in-depth and deeply contextualized study of Sufi sources (rather than their dismissal or celebration as “mystical” and otherworldly).

In short, the study of Sufi traditions in Central Asia is an essential component of studying the history of Central Asia in general, and has much to contribute toward ‘historicizing’ the study of Sufism in the Muslim world at large. It is worth stressing, however, that the study of Sufism in Central Asia stands in a distinctive place relative to scholarship on Sufi traditions elsewhere: it began, in earnest, well after the formative early phases in the study of Sufism, and both the sources and structures of Sufi history in Central Asia remained outside the conversation that shaped the study of Sufism on a broader scale. The fact that the study of Sufism in Central Asia had its impetus in Sovietology left many unfortunate legacies, but with respect to the study of Sufism in the Muslim world at large, the late ‘timing’ of scholarship on Central Asia had various consequences, with many of them, ironically, positive.

To begin with, the study of ‘Sufi history’ has moved steadily away from various older assumptions that shaped the early study of Sufism, such as the notion of Sufism’s extra-Islamic origins, or that of its fundamentally ‘un-orthodox’ character. Though elements of these paradigms lie poorly hidden in the narratives of the Bennigsen school, they had largely been abandoned in scholarship on Sufism by the time the study of Central Asian Sufi groups got underway. Similarly, the ‘golden age’ paradigm, in which the classic texts from the earliest phase of Sufi doctrinal exposition were contrasted with the ‘debasement’ and ‘popularization’ of Sufism in later times, was prominent in both Soviet and Sovietological literature, but had mostly been abandoned before the serious study of Central Asian Sufi history began, leaving a smaller body of dross to wade through, or haul away, than specialists on other regions face. Aside from the Bennigsen narrative, and some older projections about Sufism in Central Asia (based chiefly in Turkish scholarship, with a focus on the Yasavī tradition), the problem with scholarship on Sufism in Central Asia was that there was relatively little of it, *not* that what did exist was bad.

Scholarship on Sufism, in general, has also moved away from the typologies and periodizations proposed in the classic work of Trimingham.<sup>1</sup> Though we still lack a suitable ‘replacement’ volume that goes beyond the potential ‘information overload’ to offer a comprehensive synthesis, we have instead a growing body of specialized studies on particular times and places, of which the still-small but steadily expanding corpus of studies on Central Asian Sufi groups is part. Yet once again, starting late not only meant that scholarship on Sufism in Central Asia could avoid the pitfalls of those earlier assumptions and paradigms; it also meant that the field could benefit from the excellent work being produced on particular Sufi traditions and environments during the last two decades of the 20th century. It was particularly fortuitous that several outstanding specialists on Sufism in South Asia—Bruce Lawrence, Richard Eaton, Carl Ernst, Simon Digby—were producing important studies of ‘their’ region just as the study of the Central Asian context was beginning.

To be sure, the late start also meant that Central Asia’s Sufi history remained out of the line of sight for scholars who shaped important developments in Sufi studies, some of which may need revision once the case of Central Asia is considered in context. For example, important revisionist work on 18th-century Sufi networks and on ‘neo-Sufi’ movements<sup>3</sup> was not able to take stock of the trends outlined only recently in the case of Central Asian Sufi groups. Nevertheless, with regard to the narrower field of

Central Asia itself, the late start for the study of Sufism in the region has been a net positive, overall, and an additional factor is worth noting as well. Scholarship on Central Asian Sufi groups came of age as Central Asia was ‘opening up’ as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union; though circumstances have varied widely from country to country, there can be no doubt that post-Soviet times have provided increased opportunities for cooperation with scholars based in the region, and increased access to the legacies of Sufi thought, practice, and social organization, whether written or oral.

One of the chief attractions of scholarship on Sufi communities of Central Asia lies in the abundance of sources that remain largely untapped. This, of course, reminds us that the conclusions we draw about Sufi history must remain quite tentative unless and until we arrive at a more thorough assessment of the available sources. Yet despite the challenging agenda before us, it is important to acknowledge that much important and foundational work has been undertaken during just the past quarter-century. Indeed, the Princeton symposium itself stands as confirmation that the study of Sufi traditions in Central Asia has come into its own.

Thirty-odd years ago, that is, a bibliography of studies on Sufis of Central Asia would have been quite short, and skewed toward earlier periods than the one addressed in the present volume. Aside from scattered western studies focused on the pre-Mongol era, or on individual figures of that era such as al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, Abū Saīd b. Abī'l-Khayr, Aḥmad-i Jām, or Najm al-Dīn Kubrā—most of which appeared only in the 1970s—and a similarly small body of publications on Central Asian Sufis of the Mongol and Timurid periods, such as Sayyid Alī Hamadānī or Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband, one could point only to a few early studies of the Naqshbandī *khwāja* lineages of Eastern Turkistan, and to a single European publication on a post-Timurid Sufi from the western part of Central Asia (one with Sufi ties, however, with the groups in Eastern Turkistan). The list grows somewhat longer if we include Russian-language publications from Tsarist times, though many of these were not easily accessible to western scholars, and from the Soviet period as well, especially for works dealing with Central Asian Sufism after the Timurid period. Even the studies mentioned here, to be sure, were ignored in the deeply flawed and historically-uninformed literature produced by the Bennigsen school, but it was only in the second half of the 1970s and the early 1980s that the pioneering researches of Hamid Algar and the late Joseph Fletcher began to offer new starting points for understanding the history of Central Asian Sufi communities.

Since that time, the field has seen tremendous growth, represented by the publications of contributors to the present volume, and by those of others who were not able to join us at the Princeton symposium, including Bakhtiyar Babajanov, David Brophy, Stéphane A. Dudoignon, Hamada Masami, Anke von Kügelgen, Jürgen Paul, Alexandre Papas, Sawada Minoru, Maria Szuppe, Rian Thum, and Thierry Zarcone. In addition, several recent dissertations, ranging from historical investigations based on archival research to anthropological studies resulting from ethnographic fieldwork, add substantially to our understanding of the religious, intellectual, and social currents in Central Asia in which ‘Sufism’ manifested its multiple facets, from the 18th century into the 21st, and also suggest that the field’s most notable growth, and most important contributions, are yet to come.

At the same time, one general lesson to be drawn from the important studies of the past quarter-century is that the sources and structures of Sufi history in Central Asia differ substantially by period. An integrated approach is necessary to reveal these contours, identifying continuities but sensitive to the

often-shifting referents of some ‘standard’ Sufi terminology. We must abandon, indeed—or at least suspend—the idea that we can zero in on one figure or period, bringing untested assumptions based on other figures or other periods, and hope to make sense of things. This cannot mean that we avoid the specialized study of individual figures, groups, or periods; but it must mean that in undertaking those specialized studies, we attempt to contextualize them in terms of broader processes of Sufi history in Central Asia, our understanding of which must inevitably be refined by the same specialized studies.

This is in fact what the contributions to the present volume are attempting. The assembled studies are ordered roughly along chronological lines, in terms of their focus, with Devin DeWeese’s survey of much of the period placed first. His essay explores the inadequacies and impact of the Bennigsen/Sovietological narrative, and addresses the shifting patterns in organizational structure and ‘transmissional’ history among Sufi communities from the 16th to 20th centuries. It attempts to tie the Tsarist and Soviet eras into the earlier history of Central Asian Sufism, and to point out some continuities, generally overlooked in the past, that help contextualize and explain some of the failings of the Sovietological study of Sufism. It also attempts to take stock of diverse manifestations of ‘Sufi’ activity, applying a degree of conceptual flexibility that expands the range of phenomena recognizable as rooted in Sufism.

In the second study, Shahzad Bashir explores a theoretical framework for the utilization of Persian hagiographical works as sources on religious, and social, history. In so doing, he grapples critically with key questions that will confront anyone who seeks to interrogate the large body of hagiographical sources produced by and about Central Asian Sufis, as outlined briefly in DeWeese’s article, in order to study the history of Sufi communities and of the Central Asian world they inhabited. His analysis outlines the inverse relationship, in the production and actualization of hagiographical materials, among four categories that aptly describe the conceptual bases for the scholarly investigation of such materials, namely (1) the individual manuscripts through which we most often encounter hagiographical sources, (2) the texts of which we too simplistically regard the manuscripts as ‘copies,’ (3) the narrative fund that migrates in and out of the written and oral venues of ‘textual’ production and transmission, and (4) the genre of ‘hagiography’ itself—which, despite our use of a term extrinsic to Muslim literary traditions to refer to it, does indeed correspond to a recognizable body of works with distinctive shared features and, in most instances, extended patterns of intertextual relationship. With its careful delineation of these four ‘fields,’ Bashir’s essay has important implications for the agenda of our work in the study of Sufism, in which the ‘study and publication of sources’ is often seen as the crucial first step. There may be merit in this longstanding approach, but Bashir’s caution against assuming that the classical critical edition is the best way to approach hagiographical sources of our period is well taken, and indeed it may be suggested that devising strategies for the optimum use of the large number of unpublished, unstudied, and still largely unknown hagiographical sources from Central Asia is one of the central problems of the field. At the same time, Bashir also stresses that ‘publishing’ texts does not absolve the student of Sufi history of the need to use manuscripts, which, Bashir notes, always promise additional information—to the attentive reader—beyond what can be conveyed in even the best critical edition.

Along the way, more broadly, Bashir offers frequent reminders of an essential feature of hagiographical materials that makes them indispensable for the historian; he underscores, that is, the essential humanity that underlies and infuses a genre that is still too often dismissed as ‘other-worldly’ or preoccupied with the divine rather than with human, and social, concerns. Noting that hagiographical narratives convey

their central religious messages through “dramatizations of relationships between human beings,” Bashir foregrounds the human and social context, which must draw the attention of the social historian, without losing sight of the religious discourse in which hagiographies are framed. His particular examples are drawn from the body of works focused on the seminal figure of Bahā’ al-Dīn Naqshband (d. 791/1389), produced during the 15th century, which stand at the beginning of a long series of hagiographies that are yet to be ‘unpacked,’ in terms of their contents or their interrelationships or a host of other codicological, textual, and historical issues. In addition to the invaluable conceptual framework he builds for us to keep front and center as we explore Central Asian hagiographical literature, his work reminds us again that the lessons learned from grappling with 15th-century works are vital for understanding 19th- and 20th-century phenomena.

The third contribution, by Maria Subtelny, addresses another key aspect of the volume’s project by exploring the reflection of Sufi ties, and Sufi ideas, in the diverse writings of Ḥusayn Vā’iz Kāshifī (d. 910/1504–05), a major intellectual and literary figure of the late Timurid era. She thereby draws attention to the intellectual appeal, and reach, of Sufism during the 15th and early 16th centuries, doing so in the context of a specific individual whose own career effectively narrows the gap we still too often insert between the scholarly apprehension of Sufi ideas, and relationships, and the world of so-called ‘popular’ Sufism. Like Bashir’s study, her article is at once a case study illustrating, in this instance, how attention to ‘Sufism’ as refracted in the life of a single individual can illuminate that individual’s social environment as well, and a model of the issues and conceptual frameworks that can and should be kept in mind when exploring later periods that are still less well-studied than the 15th century. The pattern of scholarly ‘overlap’ evident in Kāshifī’s writings, as multiple Islamic sciences (including especially those framed as the ‘occult’ or esoteric sciences), intellectual interests, and social bonds are cultivated in a single life, helps us to frame questions about who the ‘Sufi’ is, and how ‘Sufism’ manifests itself in both intellectual and social life, that will serve us well in sweeping away the paradigms and classifications that have straitjacketed our understanding of 17th-century, or 19th- and 20th-century, Central Asia.

Ironically, indeed, attention to ‘intellectual Sufism’ once all but drowned out interest in the social history of Sufism, in Sufism’s ‘formative’ era, but the process of outlining the history of Sufi communal formations from the 12th century onward has sometimes left the impression that these groups’ intellectual history is less compelling; Sufi intellectualism in the 17th or 18th century is a barely explored phenomenon, with the exception of a few notable figures (e.g., Mullā Ṣadrā or Shāh Valīyullāh Dihlavī), but it is safe to say that no Central Asian Sufis are among those. By showing the substance of Sufi- or Sufi-influenced literature, and the intellectual content of Timurid thought as permeated by Sufi ideas, teachings, and concepts, Subtelny not only suggests the range of intellectual and social enterprises that were touched by Sufism; she reminds us that the history of Sufism may be found also in the lives of individuals who are not typically identified, first and foremost, as Sufis. At the same time, in the citations and manipulations of verse from Rūmī’s *Maṣnavī* in multiple works of Kāshifī’s *oeuvre* we may find the beginnings of a thread leading directly to the practice of many Sufi groups in Central Asia (and elsewhere) in the 18th and 19th centuries, namely the adaptation of the *Maṣnavī* as a key medium for instruction and edification, often in congregational settings, and indeed as a feature of ‘liturgical’ use in Sufi circles.

Waleed Ziad’s groundbreaking study, the fourth in the volume, explores the expansion of Sufi networks extending from Peshawar to Bukhara and beyond in the 18th and 19th centuries, focusing on the career

of the Mujaddidī shaykh Miyān Faḏl Aḥmad Ma ṣūmī, popularly known as Ḥaẓrat Jīo Ṣāḥib (1157–1231/1744–1816). This figure offers a prime example of a Sufi shaykh ‘in motion,’ both in his long-term trajectory from Sirhind, in India, the place of his birth and Sufi training, to Peshawar in the new Durrānī state of Afghanistan, and in what we may see as quite consequential ‘side-trips,’ to Bukhara, Kabul, and elsewhere in the lands of Mawarannahr, Khurasan, and Hindustan. These regions remained divided politically, but were becoming increasingly interconnected in economic, cultural, and religious terms. Indeed, Ḥaẓrat Jīo’s travels and longer residencies alike helped knit these regions together, as he established personal relationships and social and institutional frameworks—successors, disciples, ruler-patrons, *khānaqāhs*—nearly everywhere he went, helping to forge what Ziad aptly refers to as a unified “sacro-cultural” zone. That zone extended even further through the shaykh’s role as a religious ‘magnet,’ in effect, drawing followers from a much wider ‘catch-basin’ extending from other parts of India to Kashghar and Kazan. With this in mind, Ziad argues that the fact, and example, of Durrānī patronage—both that aimed directly at specific Mujaddidī Sufi leaders and that directed more broadly for the cultivation of educational and commercial institutions—launched a religious revival that radiated northward through Bukhara, into the steppe, and as far as the Volga valley, Siberia, and Xinjiang. Here, then, is yet another challenge to the Russocentric understanding of Muslim religious history in the Tsarist empire; and figures and institutions that we need not stretch at all to label “Sufi” are at the heart of it. At the same time, Ziad’s study is both an excellent example of the new perspectives and new worlds that can be uncovered through extensive ‘digging’ in the manuscript collections, *khānaqāh* libraries, and private archives of this once-unified zone in south-central Eurasia—his study brings to light a wide array of previously unused and unknown local histories and biographies of Ḥaẓrat Jīo from collections in Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan—and a reminder of how provisional our narratives of Sufi history in the region must remain until more such work is undertaken.

In contrast to Ziad’s exploration of Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī networks across a broad region, the subject of Yayoi Kawahara’s contribution, the fifth in the volume, may be regarded as one local manifestation of the Mujaddidī legacy in 19th-century Central Asia. Her study examines the social, political, and military roles of Valī Khān Tūra at the time of the fall of the khanate of Khoqand and the establishment of direct Russian rule in the Farghana valley. This figure’s name is associated with a ‘rebellion’ that has been portrayed by some as part of a proto-nationalist ‘liberation’ struggle, but Valī Khān Tūra’s role in this disturbance in itself suggests other, overarching issues, as does his community’s evident respect and reverence for him. A descendant of the pivotal 16th-century Naqshbandī shaykh known as Makhdūm-i A ṣam, Valī Khān Tūra belonged to a ‘Sufi family’ with enormous prestige throughout Central Asia, and especially in the Farghana valley. His great-grandfather was also a disciple of a prominent 18th-century Mujaddidī shaykh, providing yet another ‘injection’ of Sufi prestige and authority, both hereditary and initiatic, into the lineage. This accumulated prestige was hardly the only thing at work in the violence that has drawn attention to Valī Khān Tūra, but it provides the subtext for the rich documentary sources explored by Kawahara, whether the materials from the private family archives of his descendants (which include hagiographies and legal documents), or, inversely, the Russian documents relating to his arrest, which give voice to Russian officials’ fears and concerns about what his prestige might lead to. Perhaps the most vivid illustration, however, of what widespread local esteem for representatives of the phenomenon we refer to somewhat clinically as ‘hereditary Sufism’ might lead to is found in the seals and signs of the residents of Marghīnān, the native town of Valī Khān Tūra, on the

petition for his release. The petition itself is marked by quite understated bureaucratic language, wielded by Central Asians who had been barely three years under Russian rule, and who were compelled to acquiesce in that fact, but who nevertheless professed ‘public’ responsibility for the well-being, and good behavior, of their saint.

A different configuration of the social, economic, political, and religious implications of sanctity is presented in the volume’s sixth offering, Robert McChesney’s in-depth study of the shrine housing the Prophet’s Cloak (*khirqā-yi sharīf*) in Qandahar. Reviewing the history of the shrine from the second half of the 18th century down to the present, McChesney focuses most closely on the reigns of three Afghan rulers spanning the half century from 1880 to 1930. He uses documents relating to the shrine itself, local narrative histories, travel accounts, reports of British agents, and earlier studies of the architectural history of the site to explore, in effect, one major physical embodiment of sacrality in the social landscape of 19th- and 20th-century Afghanistan. As he outlines the economic underpinnings of the shrine and its wider economic functions, the shrine’s resonances in Afghan politics, and the social and religious roles played by the shrine and its patrons—including the fascinating discussion of individuals seeking sanctuary (*bast*) at the shrine—one question naturally arises: where are the Sufis? They are in fact hard to find in this essay, under this name; indeed, the only person who figures prominently in the discussion and is identified as a “Ṣūfi” is a calligrapher and architect who worked at the Shrine of the Prophet’s Cloak in the early 20th century. Yet the world of more explicitly ‘Sufi’ activity is never far away from the site itself. A Sufi *khānaqāh* was part of the shrine complex from its establishment in the 1770s; shrines celebrating not the Prophet’s Cloak, but saints recognized as Sufis, are nearby in Qandahar. More broadly, virtually everything about this shrine is modeled, in effect, on features and practices first, and best, known in connection with the shrines of Sufi saints. Whether we focus on the shrine’s ‘theoretical’ infrastructure in the form of the *waqfiyya*, its institutional infrastructure in the buildings and embellishments, the charitable economic provisions that linked the shrine to the local society’s needs, the family lineage that managed the shrine and came to absorb both its resources and its sacrality, the wider social circles that visited the shrine or attended to its upkeep, or the rulers who invested in the shrine, we find patterns of religious and social activity that can best be understood on the basis of parallels known from shrines of saints more directly linked with Sufism. It is as if the relic, in the form of the Prophet’s Cloak, is a substitute for the body of the Sufi saint; “reliquary Sufism” thus marks yet another conceptual expansion that may be helpful in understanding the overlapping worlds of Sufis, saints, and shrines.

It is routinely acknowledged, of course, that a ‘Sufi shrine’ may memorialize not only the place (or places) where a Sufi was buried, but a place where the saint ‘merely’ spent the night, visited, or experienced some vision or transformative grace. And by the same token, if we do not readily see figures identified as Sufis at the Shrine of the Cloak, we should remember that we may also rarely see such Sufis at the shrines of Sufis. Yet whatever is understood to make a particular site holy—and the presence of the cloak of the Prophet adds particular spiritual weight to the site in Qandahar—all such sites may harbor, or attract, different facets of Sufi religiosity, through the ‘story’ that explains the site’s holiness, through rites performed at the site, or through the social ties of the personnel who staff the site. As McChesney rightly notes in his introduction, the precise identity of the ‘thing’ believed to sanctify a particular shrine is rarely determinative of the kind of religious practice undertaken there. Arriving at an honest but flexible configuration of the ‘overlap’ between Sufism and shrine culture is indeed another key desideratum of the study of Sufism in Central Asia.

If ‘Sufism’ as typically understood seems somewhat attenuated in certain papers—assuming the form of an intellectual with interests that included, but were not limited to, Sufism in Subtelny’s study, of a sacred family in Kawahara’s, and of a shrine in McChesney’s—it comes back fully, under the name of Sufism, in the seventh study—but with a surprising twist. Allen Frank’s examination of three responses by Sufis, in the Volga-Ural region, to the critiques of Sufi practices leveled by some ‘reformist’ Muslims in the early 20th century offers multiple correctives to the camps and alignments we all too often resort to in trying to understand Muslim religious life in the Russian empire; not the least of these is the reminder that Sufis could be ‘reformers’ too. He reviews three examples of Sufi writers addressing the religious and social issues affecting Muslim society in Tsarist Russia in the first two decades of the 20th century: a local history and shrine-guide focused on Astrakhan, from 1907, a targeted Sufi critique of the practices of certain Sufis, from 1911, and another locally-based ‘family history’ from 1914. In each one, Frank finds combinations of subjects and ideas that at first glance seem incongruous, because they violate the strict delineations of political and religious ‘sides’ that recur in the scholarly literature on Muslim society in Russia, but rarely occurred in real life. One Sufi writer defends the practice of pilgrimage and simultaneously champions his vision of “progress,” admiring along the way the Islamic piety and rectitude of a group that is typically characterized—in the standard narrative one can still find repeated today—as barely Muslim, the Qazaqs. Another engages in soul-searching and self-criticism, not in order to discredit or delegitimize Sufism, but in order to purify it, and to call those drawn to it to a higher aspiration. And a third writer recounts in depth the Sufi connections of his family, all the while evincing an almost nostalgic, and at times self-critical, acknowledgment that the formerly familiar structures and aims of Sufi life were changing, and were already not what they had been a few generations earlier. The question remains, for us, what particulars of Sufism’s face in the decades after 1914 the latter author could have foreseen; answering this question is, after all, the task at hand. What we can be sure of, however, is that these writers were not the Sufis we find caricatured by the Jadids, or later by Soviet antireligious activists; they were nevertheless Sufis who must be included within our emerging understanding of what Sufism was in Tsarist Russia, on the eve of the Soviet era.

A similarly sweeping rejection of the usefulness of some key categories long employed in discussing Muslim religious life in Central Asia, now fully within the Soviet era, is the hallmark of the eighth contribution, Eren Tasar’s pathbreaking study of the continuing strength and resilience of what is plainly ‘Sufi activity’ in the 1940s and 1950s, after the era of the most intense antireligious attacks of the Soviet era. To say that Tasar turns upside down our previous narratives of Sufism, or of Islam more broadly, being driven underground, destroyed, or disappearing during the 1930s is perhaps an understatement. His study, firmly rooted in the documentary legacy of those tasked with ‘managing’ the expected, and desired, demise of religiosity in Central Asia, shows a remarkably vibrant religious world among Soviet Muslims, a world in which Sufism retained a quite public, and even ‘official,’ face. Beginning with a focused critique of the Bennigsen narrative, and thoughtfully problematizing the terminology of his documentary sources, Tasar reveals the continuing vigor of Sufi networks, in effect, through the hereditary lineage installed in the leadership of SADUM, the official Soviet administrative structure established, in the midst of the Second World War, to represent and control Islam in Central Asia. He next examines in depth one of the favorite subjects of the Bennigsen school, the case of the so-called “Hairy Ishans,” offering a well-grounded refinement of some aspects of the old narrative, and overturning other parts. Finally, he explores the remarkable case of the hereditary lineage that managed to hold onto its traditional custody of a sacred well in the Farghana valley even as the site was turned

into a Soviet health resort. The skill of the local *khojas* in negotiating, and in some cases flouting or circumventing, official opposition to their role is as remarkable as the odd stance of the Soviet governmental organs, which sought to desacralize the holy waters even as they officially sanctioned, through socialist science, their healing powers. One cannot read Tasar's study and ever again think in the same way as before about Islam, or Sufism, in Soviet Central Asia.

The ninth essay, by Ashirbek Muminov, squarely addresses the face of Sufism and the diversity of groups claiming the legacy of Sufism in contemporary Kazakhstan. He examines four types of currently-active Sufi groups, focusing on their ritual practices and on the relations among the groups: the Nashbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya-Husayniyya, with an initiatic lineage traceable to pre-Soviet times; Qādirī groups among the Chechens whose forebears were deported to Kazakhstan under Stalin; a group calling itself the Jahriyya, linked to Ismatūlla Maqşūm, a *shaykh* who moved to Kazakhstan from Afghanistan in post-Soviet times; and miscellaneous Turkish Sufi communities that have sought affiliates in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. This classification of groups by initiatic or ethnic or national origin overlies other ways of grouping them (a principle relevant to earlier times as well). In terms of historical roots in Kazakhstan, for instance, the Naqshbandī and Qādirī groups each have an established heritage in Central Asia (one considerably longer than the other), while the Jahriyya and the various Turkish groups came to Kazakhstan only in the post-Soviet era. In terms of legal status, the first group has an active “spiritual and organizational center” and is officially registered; the Chechen Qādirī groups appear to be ethnically exclusive; the leader of the Jahriyya has been exiled and is now imprisoned, with the group's Sufi activities curtailed; and the educational endeavors, at least, of the Turkish groups—which all appear to mix a ‘Sufi’ profile with other activities—have likewise been suspended recently.

Muminov's research, based mainly on oral interviews and observations, counters the Bennigsen narrative by digging into the everyday practices and the social environment of Sufis today, revealing both the continuity of long-established Sufi communities in the history of Central Asian Sufism, in the case of the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya—albeit with remodeled organizational structures, ritual practices, and ‘transmissional’ history—and the impact of more recent political developments in bringing the other groups to Kazakhstan: the Qādirī presence was tied to the upheaval of the Chechen deportation, while the Jahriyya and the Turkish groups were able to begin their activities in Kazakhstan only in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union (with their current precarious position reflecting the lingering political uncertainties of the post-Soviet era). Yet patterns long familiar from pre-Soviet Sufi communities, involving conflict, rivalry, and competition over leadership, succession, and practice—including the recurrent issue of the silent vs. vocal form of the Sufi *zikr* and the other tensions these alternatives often represent—have emerged both between and within particular groups, as Muminov's research shows. More broadly, the face of ‘Sufism’ in present-day Kazakhstan, as sketched by Muminov, demonstrates the importance, if not the necessity, of on-the-ground historical and ethnographic work in ‘Sufi’ communities, which until recently was impossible to carry out—with adverse consequences for our understanding of Sufism.

Finally, the tenth contribution likewise pulls us into the post-Soviet present, although it is firmly moored in biographical and architectural foundations stretching back through much of the Islamic era. In rooting the current search for biographical traditions surrounding the figure of Muḥammad Bashārā in the shrine, in Tajikistan, to which his name is attached, Jo-Ann Gross explores the conundrum posed by a disconnect that is not uncommon in Central Asia, but is rarely so starkly presented as in the case of this



figure. On the one hand, this architectural jewel of a shrine, featuring remarkable ornamentation and calligraphic carving as well as a striking harmonization with the environment in which it was built, suggests that the figure buried there must have been of enormous stature, to merit the devotion of such resources—both at the time of construction and afterwards, through the endowments that supported its maintenance and functioning—to his memorialization. On the other hand, aside from a passage in a 19th-century pilgrimage guide to Samarqand, practically nothing is known about him, and the usual kinds of sources in which we seek biographical details, or hagiographical narratives, about other saints—including those linked with much less impressive shrines—fail us in his case. The disconnect between a prominent, and well-cared-for shrine, and an obscure saint is interesting in its own right, but as Gross shows, shrine culture abhors a vacuum, and multiple ‘experts’ have emerged to provide a ‘back-story’ for both the shrine and the saint. Similar to McChesney’s study of “reliquary Sufism,” the ‘overlap’ between Sufism and shrine culture, in this case, consists of a long-established tradition of pilgrimage, the physical construction over time of the mosque/*khānaqāh*/mausoleum, and a multifaceted biographical tradition.

The main players in the creation of the ‘back-story’ for the saint are the editor/translator of a hagiographical text, published near the very beginning of the post-Soviet era (based on an earlier, as yet unidentified, 19th-century text), and the ‘Salafi’-style proponents of purifying Tajik Islam, a more recent feature of the Central Asian landscape, as also seen in Muminov’s study. The hagiography portrays Muḥammad Bashārā as a native of the region where his shrine now stands, who journeyed to meet the Prophet and adopt Islam, returned to his homeland to bring Islam there, and despite the martyrdom of many Muslims, finally won the conversion of the local infidels. It is replete with familiar hagiographical motifs and invites pilgrims to participate in the saint’s blessedness at his shrine. The Salafi biographical offering rejects most of the hagiographical motifs, in the name of pinning down a ‘historical’ and de-mythologized *muḥaddith* of 8th century Basra named Muḥammad b. Bashshār, based on Arabic biographical and *ḥadīth* literature. It lays out a restrictive vision of ‘proper’ practice in visiting shrines, again based on a limited repertoire of *ḥadīths*, but is in fact notable for stopping short of the total rejection of shrine culture featured in much Salafi literature. Despite this work’s conditional validation of shrine culture, the two biographies devised for the shrine saint offer a good encapsulation of the religious choice facing Central Asian Muslims today. Yet much of the ‘baggage’ they carry as they face this choice is of Soviet manufacture, and not the least of this study’s merits is the addition of Soviet archeologists and architectural historians to the company of blind men intent on describing this particular elephant. Their quarrels over the building’s dating and ‘original’ purpose were ostensibly based on the firm scientific study of material culture, but one can also find more than a few signs that ultimately tenuous assumptions—about the figure believed to be buried there and about the religious lives of those who developed the shrine and patronized it—helped to shape their arguments about the site.

...

Taken together, these studies mark a new phase in the development of scholarship on Sufi traditions of Central Asia, expanding and deepening the source base, reconceptualizing basic frameworks for understanding Sufi history, and challenging received assumptions and narratives. It is hoped that this sort of approach to the study of Sufism in Central Asia—an approach freed from the constraints of the Sovietological framework in which the subject was initially considered—may contribute to the broader

goal of restoring Sufism, and religious life in general, to historical inquiry, both by improving our understanding of the social structures through which 'religion' acts in historical terms, and by reminding us of the essentially religious visions that shape those social structures. <>

## **SUFI WOMEN OF SOUTH ASIA: VEILED FRIENDS OF GOD** by Tahera Aftab [Series: Women and Gender: The Middle East and the Islamic World, Brill, 9789004467170]

In **SUFI WOMEN OF SOUTH ASIA. VEILED FRIENDS OF GOD**, the first biographical compendium of hundred and forty-one women, from the eleventh to the twentieth century, Tahera Aftab fills a serious gap in the existing scholarship regarding the historical presence of women in Islam and brings women to the centre of the expanding literature on Sufism. The book's translated excerpts from the original Farsi and Urdu sources that were never put together create a much-needed English-language source base on Sufism and Muslim women. The book questions the spurious religious and cultural traditions that patronise gender inequalities in Muslim societies and convincingly proves that these pious women were exemplars of Islamic piety who as true spiritual masters avoided its public display.

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Academic studies of Sufis and Sufism, since the beginning of the twentieth century, have acquired a growing popularity among scholars and readers. Most of these studies

have been limited to the accounts of male Sufis. Such studies, in some instances, even view moral and ethical virtues—which are integral in such narratives—in two separate blocks: as male and female virtues. Trapped by this distorting notion, studies of Islam in general, and Sufism in particular, remain routinely limited to the accounts and attainments of male Sufis; women remain, at best, an addendum. Women, whenever they appear in the pages of such writings, are portrayed as appendages of the male Sufis, mostly exemplifying male piety or projecting female wickedness; depictions of women’s characteristics of caring and nurturing are rare. In both these instances, women, as a class, are annihilated. This book brings Sufi women of South Asia to the centre of historical knowledge and restores their rightful status in the growing and expanding literature on Sufism worldwide.

One of the major hurdles in the development of Muslim societies is under recognition of women’s potential which results in underutilisation of women’s agency, and often exploitation of their labour. The root cause of this underutilisation is the propagation of misogynist thoughts emerging from patriarchal readings of the sacred texts of Islam, giving currency to myths about women being troublemakers and deficient in intelligence. These misogynist interventions in the realm of faith and tradition do not remain limited to sermons delivered from the pulpits or religious discourses; they cross the borders of social perceptions and behaviour. Thus, the dichotomic debate over women’s assumed innate disability and deficiency persists, often slowing down women’s fair and just participation in community development.

The book that I present to my readers moves away from the traditional craft of writing half-histories of Sufism in South Asia. Discarding this suppressive methodology of writing history, *Sufi Women of South Asia: Veiled Friends of God* presents Sufi women in their full human glory. The present work, thus, is inspired by three goals: first, to search out and collate relevant references found in the South Asian Sufi texts, including hagiographical accounts, about Sufi women; second, to present specific narratives or references about mystic women, and thus to salvage and secure these narratives with the purpose of restoring women’s histories; and third, to explore women’s understanding of *taṣawwuf* and the way they followed it. The last of these goals is the focal point or the real inspiration of this book, and it runs through the entire text. This

book, therefore, is not just an outcome of spending torturous hours mining and extracting hidden treasures of Sufi women's history, though that is much warranted and even commendable; the book also argues that these salvaged and retrieved narratives of pious women rightfully are part of mainstream Sufi canon. The number of accounts of Sufi women that have been discovered abundantly shows that the narratives of South Asian Sufis that do not include women—or that include them merely as an addendum or as a ploy to glorify Sufi men—merely presents half of history.

My conviction that righteous and virtuous women have existed always and everywhere because all women, like all men, are the progeny of the first human couple appointed by Allah as His khalifa on Earth, led me to begin research for this book with two hypotheses. The first is that women were and are central in the history of the spread of taṣawwuf and also in Sufi praxis and discourses. My second hypothesis is that, for some reason, this presence of women is either purposely and consciously concealed or omitted. At the outset, I assured myself that women's stories should not be obliterated. I also believed that the male-authored chronicles have kept such women veiled. I was also convinced that exemplary women, like exemplary men, who are awliyā' Allah have always existed and will continue to exist to guide fellow human beings in seeking the Truth. My conviction emerges from my trust in the Word of Allah and my belief that these friends of Allah, by virtue of their friendship with the Divine, the only Reality without shape and form, are humans first and last.

These convictions worked as motivation through the past several years. In searching for, selecting, and studying source material, both textual and oral, I remained careful; as a student of history, the lesson I have learned is that while some texts are written to project and preserve the truth, others are created to erase the truth. Wilful omission, suppression of facts, and a selection of what suits the scribe is similar to withholding testimony and consequently turns history into nothing less than perjury. I must admit that I am cognisant of the inherent challenges that confront the writers of history, as all available sources owe their existence first to selective writing, next to archiving, and then to random indexing.

The present study, SUFI WOMEN OF SOUTH ASIA: VEILED FRIENDS OF GOD, takes the form of a historical overview and presents biographical notices of pious and virtuous women from the early tenth century to contemporary times. Biographical notices are analytically integrated and synthesised with the major and foundational Sufi texts, the *malfūzāt* and the *tazkirāt*. Recent works are also included to examine the continuity of the earlier traditions that encouraged harbouring gender biases. This book is thus a rereading of the past. This process of rereading gives new meanings to the older texts and suggests new patterns of social behaviour and fresh modes of thinking.

This book, thus, entails the production of a new understanding of the prevalent gendered nature of religious behaviour and practices by reconstructing the lives of pious women. This work primarily is a biographical compendium of women who believed in and practiced asceticism and avoided its public display. To prepare this book, I have drawn on multiple types of source material, written as well as oral, including fieldwork observation which was done primarily in Pakistan—Karachi, Thatta, Makli, Lahore, Multan, and Uchch. Information was also collected with the help of email and WhatsApp. Interviews with shrine managers, staff of the Auqaf Department (the Department that looks after charitable endowments and bequests), religious scholars, and even shopkeepers, taxi drivers, and passers-by in the vicinity of the shrines yielded invaluable knowledge. Finally, this volume is not about women alone, to the exclusion of men; indeed, it seeks to place women in a wider, more inclusive social framework.

My focus throughout this study is not the *ṭarīqa*-based Sufism which increasingly got trapped in highly ritualised performances in the garb of right conduct (*ādāb*). A critical review of how Sufi theses of the different Sufi *silsilas* swayed and guided the course of the cultural ethos of the South Asian Muslim community, however, has remained a quintessential aspect of this study. Thus, this book explores relationships between South Asian Sufism and the Muslim community through the kaleidoscope of women's lives. This volume, I hope, would set in motion a fresh process of scrutinizing the texts and other records in order to understand women's experiences at all levels—mundane as well as spiritual. This scrutinizing process anticipates raising specific questions. Several epistemological questions that might not be considered directly connected

with the lives of Sufi women are legitimate questions of crucial significance for a holistic understanding of women's experiences. I expect that these questions would lead to more questions, if not instant answers. One basic question, which is of crucial significance, is regarding the false and erroneous concept of women as the cause of the so-called fall of Adam from Heaven and of the misconstrued deception by Eve of Adam. The second question is why the interpretation of surah 4:34 of the Qur'ān as a verse about women's subordination is not re-examined as a distortion of the message of the Qur'ān and how do these exegeses continue to relegate women into the private spaces? Sadly, and shockingly, male Sufis not only approved these mistaken and misleading interpretations but professed and propagated these fallacies. The third question is regarding women's mobility. Are restrictions on women's mobility legitimate? The texts, under review in this book, promoted a restricted view of women by professing that virtuous women are women who remain concealed and hidden. Is this view in accordance with the Qur'ān and the Traditions of the Prophet?

I find myself compelled to add a personal note here concerning the popular usage of the word Sufi. The traditional adāb of South Asian Muslims, which nurtured my being and is reflected in all forms of conduct of the community, expounds two distinctly opposite types of human temperaments (mizāj): Sufiāna, simple, soft, humble, and subdued; and sauqyiāna, commonplace or loud, almost vulgar. Thus, a Sufiāna mizāj person would eat moderately, converse softly, and avoid flamboyant behaviour. On the contrary, a sauqyiāna mizāj person would devour food noisily, with ostentatious manners. In short, the Sufi way is embedded in the cultural ethos. This cultural ethos is created, nurtured, and transmitted to generations after generations by women in their families. Curiously, despite their negative views of women, male Sufis have also paid homage to this role of women. To illustrate, let me share my personal experience of the Sufi baraka in my life. The story goes back to before I was born. The loss of her seven-day-old daughter, her first child, devastated and traumatised my nineteen-year-old mother beyond any imagination. Emotionally wrecked, she would sit cross-legged for months, between the 'asr and the maghrib prayers, hoping that the spirit of her daughter would visit her. As the child had died without sucking a drop of breast milk, a rumour grew that it was no ordinary being. A spell had overpowered the baby, it was

said. Later, to protect my mother, my paternal grandfather brought her a t'āwīz (protection amulet) from the shrine of his pīr, Ḥaẓrat Miān Mastān Shāh.<sup>1</sup> Two years later, when my mother was pregnant with me, she wished to have a daughter. To protect her pregnancy, my grandfather again sought the help from the dargah. This time, a holy person arrived and literally punched four iron nails into the four corners of our sprawled house, thus drawing a protective boundary for the safe delivery. The nails were to be taken off on the fortieth day following the birth. All through the period of her pregnancy, my mother was not to cross the sacred line of protection. On my fortieth day, I was taken to the shrine of Bī Mayya, a mystic who is believed to have arrived in Rampur along with the earliest migrants from Buner, Swat.<sup>2</sup> For the next fourteen years of my life, on my birthday, a set of the finest green glass bangles and a headscarf of green-coloured muslin, kept in a basket full of scented flowers, was offered in thanksgiving as a nazrāna at the ziyārat. Women of the family were strongly discouraged from visiting the shrine, though it was just across the road. The feminine of the Divine, thus, through the intercession of Bī Mayya, remains part of my existence, though Allah hath power over all things (surah 2:109).

In conclusion, I would like to share with my readers the history of the making of this book. My interest in the study of women Sufis began a long time ago when the late Professor Muhammad Mujeeb, whom sadly I could not meet personally, suggested in his foreword to my book *Women Mentors of Men* that to the list of women enjoying earthly power, I should also add women from other classes as well. His observation that “Shaikh Nizamuddin’s mother, for instance, would be a very instructive subject to discuss as she is one of many whose lives are memorable”<sup>3</sup> remained etched on my mind all through the last several decades. I explored libraries and archives for books in South Asia and elsewhere to identify works related to the lives of South Asian Muslim women. I did find some, but if any reference to Sufi women was found, it was more as a gesture of offering respect, praise, and adulation.<sup>4</sup> Their histories, and their contributions to the development and growth of discourse on spirituality, were missing. Since then, several studies dealing with women and spirituality have been published. While I offered several courses and seminars on *Women in Islam* and *Women and Religion* and remained mentally engaged with Sufism and the Sufis, I kept

postponing my study of Sufi women. Once the weight became almost unbearable, I began to shape my thoughts into words. The present work, thus, while it lessens my burden, accumulated by neglecting and postponing research that is close to my heart, attempts to erase or at least minimise the neglect of the illustrious pious women. It also finally gives me the opportunity to thank the late Professor Mujeeb.

The book aims to attract readers from varied backgrounds and affiliations—scholars of Islam in all geographies, students of comparative religions, feminist scholars, scholars of women’s history, and of course all those who are travellers on the path of knowledge. At the risk of sounding vain, this biographical compendium of South Asian pious women is unique in its contents and presentation. This book, in essence and in form, is the long-awaited, modern-day tazkira of awliyā’ Allah. I feel honoured to present stories of women awliyā’ from South Asia for the first time for wider global readership.

### **The Structure of the Book**

This preface introduces the book SUFI WOMEN OF SOUTH ASIA: VEILED FRIENDS OF GOD, which indeed is unique and the first of its kind in terms of the number of biographies of Sufi women and their shrines. The book covers the vast geographical expanse of South Asia from the eleventh century to the early twentieth century.

The introduction sets the scene with a brief overview of the recurrent theme of the book, unveiling the presence of Sufi women. It identifies the key factors that shaped women’s lives at the nascent stage of the growth of the Muslim community in Hindustan and continued to play the most significant role in gender equation within the society. Review of selected recent scholarly works and modern research studies relevant to my work is offered. Next, I have added a note on research methods and process adopted for the completion of this book.

The main body of my study is divided into two parts; each set offers a narrative which, though different in themes examined and discussed, is threaded with the other. Part 1 consists of eight chapters. Chapter 1, which sets the scene, has four subheads. The first part of this chapter presents an assessment of the evolution of the Muslim society in South Asia, with a brief but critical assessment of women’s presence in the emerging Muslim community of South Asia. Allied to this theme, the book looks next at the



arrival of the Sufis, both male and female, under separate subheads. This overview is followed by a brief study of Sufism, its meanings and concepts, as explained and taught by the early Sufi Shaikhs in South Asia. With an analytical approach, this chapter examines two terms: Sufism and *taṣawwuf*, which are the two most familiar terms in studies on Islamic mysticism. With reference to the expositions of the two terms by celebrated Sufi Shaikhs, this chapter shows that while Sufism puts emphasis on the Sufi *ṭarīqas* with their Shaikh-created rules, *taṣawwuf* exists without any hierarchical control over other human beings. It is simply obedience to the Divine. These three themes set the scene for the development, growth, and maturation of ideas and concepts, and for the interplay of power and authority within the spiritual and profane spaces.

Chapter 2, which is divided into nine subheads, presents an assessment of Sufi sources. This chapter examines, with reference to selected texts and their authors, how the concept of men in authority and women in obedience was codified in the Sufi canons. The first category of these texts emerged from the spoken word of a Sufi Shaikh. The spoken words were recorded on paper by a scribe, recalling what was said earlier. These spoken words soon transformed themselves into solid works of manuals on ethics, morality, and spirituality. This chapter examines how and under what forces the direction of gender dynamics of the emerging South Asian Muslim society were shaped and formed. These gender dynamics have not changed much over the centuries and continue to remain in effect even today. An appraisal of major trendsetters in establishing conservative gender norms is also included here and linked with the absence or scarcity of women's visibility in the Sufi canon. Finally, a brief appraisal of shrines as sources for the identification of Sufi women who are omitted or not found in the texts is added. The importance of shrines, both as a source for compiling Sufi women's biographies and as sacred spaces for the expression of their spirituality, is highlighted.

Next, I present an assessment of how all women are viewed through the male Sufi's gaze—as inherently feeble in intellect and innately trouble-causing, and who can only be tolerated at the lower levels of social, political, and religious hierarchies. Women as the cause of Adam's Fall from Heaven, women as *fitna*, as an embodiment of evil and as

devoid of reasoning, intellect, and proper understanding of faith is critically evaluated in this chapter.

Next is an analysis of male Sufis' perception of their family responsibilities, the women of their families, their attitude towards married life and sex, and care of their children. Chapter 5 is an appraisal of a much-neglected issue related to fallen women and women-slaves and maidservants. Women's initiation, or taking an oath of allegiance into the Sufi order, is examined in chapter 6. Chapter 7 presents a brief overview of Sufi abodes, lodges, and khānqāhs which emerged as icons of spiritual authority, separating the sacred from the profane, and raising structures that stood next to mosques but often attracted larger attendees. This chapter concludes by looking at women's lodges or khānqāhs and their presence at the male Sufi khānqāhs. Chapter 8 examines controversies about shrine visitation. This chapter symptomizes the everlasting glory of Sufi darbārs and ziyārats which sanctify the landscape of South Asian Islam, and it examines women's presence at shrines and studies the continuous debate over shrine visitation, particularly by women as an irreligious act. Throughout my analysis of the primary sources, I have been watchful in reading the texts by visualising the producers of these discourses, the scribe of the texts and their first audiences, in the context of gender dynamics and the cultural-social ethos of the period of their production.

Part 2 of the work, the essence of this research, shows how women, overriding male power structures of authority created and sustained by rituals, negotiated with the male paradigms of spirituality and connected with the Divine. Thus, applying their self-agency, these women silently created a space for themselves where they sought the Divine, away from public gaze and male scrutiny. Here, divided into several chapters, I have presented 134 biographical notices of Sufi women. Chapter 9 consists of 83 notices, 63 of which are from the tenth century to the early twentieth century and an additional 20 for which the dates are not known or confirmed. Chapter 10 includes notices of 83 Sufi women according to their specific status: nine Sufi women Khalīfas; one Sufi woman who held spiritual sessions for women; five Sufi women who performed bai'at at the hands of their Sufi fathers/husbands/sons/brothers; nine notices of Sufi women who are mothers of Sufi men and women; one Sufi woman who was recognised as Murshid by her husband; narratives of three Sufi women who did not

marry; exceptional case studies of two Sufi women who performed duties as managers of male Sufis' shrines; nine stories of intoxicated Sufi women; three young girls who were endowed with the charismatic powers of an excellent Sufi; one Sufi woman who is known to have a khānqah; stories of two women who preferred death to a life of dishonour; a Pashtun Sufi woman who wrote a book of instructions for Sufi men; the narrative of a Sufi woman who wrote the only Sufi tazkira and her autobiographical experiences of becoming a devout Sufi; and finally the amazing story of a sixteenth-century Sufi woman who revoked her pledge, led an agitation movement amongst the male Sufis, and finally earned success in her mission.

Chapter 11 presents biographical narratives of seventeen Sufi women based on oral traditions and through the studies of their shrines. This study draws upon my several visits to women's shrines in Karachi, Multan, and Lahore. The most fascinating aspect of this chapter is the real presence of women within the spiritual environs of today.

Lastly, in chapter 12 a list of names of thirty-two Sufi women from different regions of South Asia is added, with no major details. These names are extracted from texts, including one manuscript. Also included, extracted from *Tawārīkh ā'īna-yi taṣawwuf*, an 1893 hagiography of the Ṣābirī silsila, is a list of 107 Sufi women, along with their dates of birth and death, places of their birth and death, and location of their shrines, along with their hierarchical/spiritual status. I must point out that in addition to the biographical notices this book presents, there are many more scattered and hidden in vernacular texts and in local legends, waiting to be redeemed from obscurity. I must also say that this last subchapter, though it offers sparse information and consists mostly of names only, still carries great significance. I interpret this scanty information as historic evidence of the presence of more Sufi women in more areas of South Asia. The usual practice is to present such information in the form of an appendix. I have opted not to relegate these entries to an appendix. I believe that sketchy narratives and accounts of life stories of Sufi women are not a criterion for their allocation to an appendix; indeed, they reflect more on the nature and method of historiography in general, and the writing of women's history in particular, and far less on the merit of these women of piety.

All entries are in alphabetical order by giving the name of the Sufi woman as it appears in the primary texts, inscriptions, oral traditions, and other sources that I have accessed. I have given dates of birth, death, and 'urs (celebration of death anniversary at the shrines), if available. Biographical notices vary in length, depending on the availability of information.

A brief conclusion brings the book to its end. To help the readers have a smooth and comfortable reading of the book, I have also added a glossary of words and terms in Persian, Urdu, and other local languages. <>

## **SHI`ISM REVISITED: IJTIHAD AND REFORMATION IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES** by Liyakat Takim [Oxford University Press, 9780197606575]

Contemporary Muslims face a challenge: how should they define the relationship between normative Islamic jurisprudence—worked out by classical jurists over the course of centuries—and the reality that confronts them in their everyday lives. They have to reckon with how religion can regulate and serve the needs of a changing community. Is there a need for reformation in Islam? If so, where should it begin and how should it proceed? So far, these challenging questions have received little attention from Western scholars. *Shi`ism Revisited* will address this gap.

In order to address pressing religious and social questions—on topics ranging from women's rights to bioethics and the challenges facing diasporic Muslims—legal scholars have sought to apply *ijtihad*, or independent reasoning. The lack of a central authority in Islam means the interpretations and edicts of scholars are frequently challenged, resulting in diversity and plurality in Islamic law. This makes Islamic law capacious, but also suggests the critical importance of examining not just the theory of law, but its application.

*Shi`ism Revisited* moves beyond theoretical questions of reformation to address specific ways that Islamic law is being revisited by jurists. Tracing the origins and development of Shi'i jurisprudence and legal theory, Liyakat Takim analyzes how underlying epistemologies can be revised in order to create a moral and coherent legal system.

### **Review**

"I found *Shi`ism Revisited* extremely interesting, surefooted, rich, very well-argued, and well-presented. There are resources in the book that one can hardly find in any other study of the same genre. It is no doubt of value to anyone working with research in Islamic law. —ABDOLKARIM SOROUSH, Scholar in Islamic theology and mysticism

Takim has written the most comprehensive book on Shi'i *ijtihad*, in English, and he unapologetically calls for urgent, sweeping legal reforms, gender equality, and human rights. His book contains an entire

education on the inner workings of Islamic law" —ZACKERY MIRZA HEERN, Associate Professor, Department of History, Idaho State University

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My interest in an Islamic reformation was first triggered in 2011 during a sabbatical sojourn in Qum, Iran. It was during that period that I engaged in extensive conversations with Iranian youth, many of whom spoke passionately about the topic and expressed their disappointment at how Shi'i jurisprudence was seemingly out of touch with the sociopolitical realities in Iran. It was also at this time that I engaged in extensive debates and conversations with some prominent jurists in Qum. The result of my research work and deliberations with various groups of students and jurists are in the book in front of you.

To be sure, topics such as religion and gender equality, the inalienable rights and dignity of all human beings, the rights of gays and lesbians, transgender surgery, cloning, and ecology are now some of the most important and pressing questions of our age. As I read through the writings and views of jurists in the seminaries like Ayatullahs Yusuf Sane'i, Fadlallah, Bujnurdi, Muhaqqiq Damad, Mohsen Kadivar, Kamal Haydari, Shaykh Muhsin Sa'idzadeh, Edalatzadeh, and Mahdi Mahrizi, I felt that it was important to make the ongoing debates and conversations in Iran known to other scholars, especially those in the West. The lack of a centralized learning system and financial independence from the political entity offer an opportunity for reformist scholars in the seminaries to challenge and critique the works of other scholars, engendering, in the process, a dynamic intellectual environment. As I discuss later, some reform-minded seminarians have vigorously challenged the epistemological foundations and genre of rulings issued by the religious elite. Contrary to what is reported in the popular and social media, I found that some of the most intellectually stimulating discussions were conducted in the seminaries in Qum. Not only are the discussions invigorating but also it would not be an exaggeration to say that there is an ongoing intellectual struggle between the conservative and reformist scholars in the seminaries.

In this work I demonstrate that engaging the Islamic sacred sources is essential so as to revitalize Islamic thought and that the reformists' engagement with juridical and textual hermeneutics have generated an increasingly liberal interpretation and appraisal of Islamic juristic literature. In the process, I analyze the intersections of law, hermeneutics, and modernity in Shi'i Islam. In my analysis, I highlight reformist ideas that emerge from both inside and outside the traditional Shi'i seminaries in Qum and Najaf. However, this should not be construed as implying that all jurists subscribe to the reformist agenda. On the contrary, many jurists, especially the senior ones, are critical of any reformation in Islam.

Ideas surrounding reformation, diversity, and changes in legal rulings are not alien to Shi`ism. In fact, given the changes in juristic rulings over the course of centuries, it could be argued that they are as old as Shi`i jurisprudence itself. What is novel about the current reformist discourse is the call for revisions in the fundamental foundations and epistemology that undergird Islamic legal theory (*usul al fiqh*). My aim in this study is therefore to examine, analyze, and contribute to the ongoing debate on a Shi`i understanding of reformation. More specifically, I explore and analyze how Shi`i jurists have reacted to the nexus of Islamic law and modernity. The study seeks to move beyond theoretical questions revolving around reformation to address important issues such as how Islamic law is being revisited and revised by jurists on a wide range of topics ranging from women's testimony and inheritance, their right to divorce, and freedom of conscience, to bioethics and the challenges facing diasporic Muslims. Such questions have required legal scholars to apply *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) so as to provide solutions to the pressing questions in the religious and social fields. The absence of a central authority in Islam means that the interpretations and edicts of erstwhile scholars have frequently been challenged, resulting in diversity and plurality in Islamic laws. This suggests the critical importance of examining not just the theory of Islamic law but also its application.

By examining the principles and application of *usul al fiqh*, as well as the current discourse on juristic hermeneutics and the basis of a new *ijtihad*, it is my hope that this research will generate great interest in and contribution to the field of Islamic reformation. More importantly, since this topic has been largely neglected by Western scholarship, I hope that my study will provide a groundbreaking perspective on *ijtihad* and reformation in the Shi`i world. My exploration of *ijtihad* and Islamic reformation is divided into five chapters, introduced in the following sections.

#### The Concept of an Islamic Reformation

Before I introduce the chapters of this book, a word of caution is in order. Some readers might find the second chapter, with its technical details and legal jargon, to be abstract, tedious, and, at times, heavy reading. For those who feel that way, I suggest they skip the sections that contain technical details and proceed to chapters 3 and 4, which, in the words of one of the reviewers, are "path-breaking"

The first chapter defines reformation and examines what it means in a specifically Shi`i context. It compares reformation in Islam and Christianity and argues that an Islamic reformation has to be an indigenous exercise, one that does not have to capitulate to the demands of a secular or exogenous religious tradition. The chapter also considers why reformation in Shi`ism started much later than it did in Sunnism.

For most reformers, *ijtihad* is the primary interpretive tool in the process of reforming Islamic jurisprudence. *Ijtihad* is connected to reformation precisely because it furnishes a jurist with indispensable interpretive tools and principles to help him revise earlier edicts or devise newer ones. I argue that the current form of *ijtihad* in Shi`ism is not capable of addressing some of the most pressing moral and ethical issues that have arisen as a consequence of changes in times and circumstances.

Since an Islamic reformation is interwoven with an understanding and reinterpretation of textual sources, the first chapter also discusses the concept of hermeneutics and its effects on the reading of sacred texts. I argue that a hermeneutical approach is important to a discussion of Islamic reformation because of its insistence that the meaning of a text depends on various textual, contextual, and

intellectual factors. Invoking hermeneutical theories postulated by various scholars also means that legal precepts and interpretations issued by eminent jurists over the centuries can be challenged and modified based on the needs of contemporary times. This is because textual hermeneutics is an endless exercise.

A discourse on Islamic reformation requires a detailed analysis of *ijtihād*. This is because the latter is an essential interpretive tool that jurists use in the derivation of legal injunctions. Rather than detailing the intricacies and complexities of *usul al-fiqh*, chapter 2 traces the genesis and development of both *ijtihād* and *usul al fiqh* in Shi'i intellectual history and then explicates some of the principles that jurists employ in extrapolating legal prescriptions. The chapter argues that the concern for knowledge and certitude, which characterized much of Shi'i juristic literature in its formative period, was displaced with a recognition and acceptance of doubt as an inalienable feature of the law. While the transition from certitude to conjecture was a development that took place over centuries, the critical phase of this movement can be located in the lifetime of the scholars of Hilla in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. They elaborated and definitively developed a specific Shi'i theory of *ijtihād*. Whereas earlier scholars had ruled on areas where there was probability or certainty that their judgments indicated the wishes of the Lawgiver, Shaykh Ansari (d. 1864) constructed and methodically explored the epistemological categories of certainty, speculation, and doubt. I argue that this was another important transitional period in Shi'i legal history, because it empowered jurists to issue rulings on many spheres of law that had hitherto remained beyond their realm, broadening, in the process, the scope of Islamic law and the possibilities of its revision.

Besides the textual sources and procedural principles, jurists can employ other rationally derived tools and devices to either modify earlier legal enactments or formulate new ones. These are key components in the Islamic reformation process. Chapter 3 considers the application of some principles and legal devices and their capability to shape new rulings or revise earlier ones. I argue that, at best, these devices can provide only partial and temporary amendments to existing legal injunctions. This is because they are motivated primarily by pragmatic and often short-term considerations. Notions like ethics, reason, justice, the function of local custom in the interpretation and application of the law, and the practices of the people of sound mind (*sira a!-'uqala'*) have, so far, played limited roles in juridical decision-making, as they are predicated on rational and hermeneutical strategies rather than on prescriptions in the textual sources.

An important segment of chapter 3 examines the role of custom (*'urf*) in juristic interpretive enterprises. I contend that, in the absence of well-defined procedures and stipulations on deriving and instituting laws, the Qur'an presumes that its legal rulings will be understood based on prevalent customary practices and values. A consequence of this observation is that current jurists who insist on enforcing edicts issued in the past need to be cognizant of the fact that they are, in effect, frequently validating eighth-century and pre-Islamic Arabian cultural values and imposing them on contemporary Muslims.

The chapter also demonstrates that engaging in *ijtihād* today entails a bifurcation of laws and values from the cultural accretions in the early period of Islam. It also means that since the law is inveterated in and responds to cultural exigencies, some of the laws that were instituted in a distinct cultural context will have to be revised especially when they interact with a different cultural framework. I argue that just as pre-Islamic custom (*'urf*) was endorsed by the early generation of Muslims, the local *'urf* that Muslims

encounter today can be approbated and sanctioned on the same basis. Chapter 3 also explores how local custom that is endorsed by people of sound mind (*ʿuqala'*) can legislate laws in today's context.

Chapter 4 argues that the Shi'i claim that the moral value of an act can be known objectively without scriptural validation accentuates the role of reason in perceiving moral values and simultaneously, enables a jurist to deduce new injunctions based on moral rationalist considerations, especially if a particular topic is not addressed in the revelatory texts. By emphasizing the rational character of *fiqh*, reason becomes a cogent hermeneutical tool in Islamic jurisprudence, and an important component in the reformation of the law. In the process, reason also becomes a principle for the construction of a moral framework of the law.

The chapter also argues that legal determinations based on rational and ethical considerations can empower a jurist to legislate on topics that are congruent with the views of the people of sound mind. In principle, such proclamations can even override laws that are derived from the textual sources when necessary. However, most *fuqaha'* (jurists) have undermined the ethical-moral vision of the Qur'an in favor of a neatly defined textually documented legal process. I demonstrate that disregarding the role of ethics in legal deliberations has led to the inference and issuance of iniquitous statements by the very scholars who uphold the Islamic ethical and legal tradition. The chapter also argues that in order to make Islamic jurisprudence more ethical, Muslim scholars will have to incorporate principles like justice, dignity, and judgments of reason (*aql*) in their legal deliberations so that these principles play more central and decisive roles in determining how the sources are interpreted and applied.

Given the deficiencies of traditional *ijtihad* highlighted in the previous chapters, chapter 5 seeks to evaluate and reconsider some of the interpretive strategies and epistemological foundations of the current form of *ijtihad*. The basic thesis here is that, in the context of the present discourse on an Islamic reformation, the moral rationalist presuppositions of Muslim reformers are diametrically opposed to the traditional jurists' text-centered epistemological assumptions.

I also contend that the current form of inferential jurisprudence (*al-fiqh al-istidlali*) should be replaced by what I call retro-jihadism and that, should this transition occur, it will engender major paradigmatic shifts in the genre of rulings pronounced. More specifically, I contend that an Islamic reformation necessitates a re-examination and revision of the epistemological and methodological foundations that undergird the current Islamic legal system. These are the key principles and procedures that guide a jurist in his interpretation and application of the information he deduces from the sources. I postulate different exegetical and hermeneutical strategies that neo-*ijtihadism* could adopt and propose solutions that synthesize hermeneutical strategies with current exigencies so as to make *ijtihad* more moral, rational, and practical. <>



## **THE RISE OF THE NI'MATULLAHI ORDER: SHI'ITE SUFI MASTERS AGAINST ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM IN 19TH-CENTURY PERSIA** by Reza Tabandeh [Leiden University Press, 9789087283674]

How were the Ni'matullahi masters successful in reviving Ni'matulláhi Sufism in Shiite Persia? This book investigates the revival of Ni'matullahi Sufi order after the death of the last Indian Ni'matullahi master, Rida 'Ali Shah (d. 1214/1799) in the Deccan.

After the fall of Safavids, the revival movement of the Ni'matullahi order began with the arrival in Persia of the enthusiastic Indian Sufi master, Ma'sum 'Ali Shah, during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Later, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Persian masters of the Ni'matullahi Order were able to solidify the order's place in the mystical and theological milieu of Persia. Ma'sum 'Ali Sháh and his disciples soon spread their mystical and ecstatic beliefs all over Persia. They succeeded in converting a large mass of Persians to Sufi teachings, despite the opposition and persecution they faced from Shiite clerics, who were politically and socially the most influential class in Persia. The book demonstrates that Husayn 'Ali Shah, Majdhub 'Ali Shah, and Mast 'Ali Shah were able to consolidate the social and theological role of the Ni'matullahi order by reinterpreting and articulating classical Sufi teachings in the light of Persian Shi'ite mystical theology.

### **Review**

This insightful study is an astute and sensitive portrayal of one of the world's most important repositories of esoteric Islam, the Ni'matullahi Sufi order. Drawing upon an impressive range of sources, many still in manuscript form, Reza Tabandeh paints a compelling and fascinating portrait of the history and spiritual traditions of this Shi'i community of mystics. - Shafique Virani, University of Toronto

A valuable and accessible work on the revival of Sufism in 19th century Iran. Tabandeh illustrates successfully the precarious efforts of Ni'matullahi Sufis to carve out their space in the religious landscape of Iranian Twelver Shiism. - Oliver Scharbrodt, University of Birmingham

The book offers a clear image of the Ni'matullahi order's migration, its revival and reformation, and its leaders' political and religious involvement in Iranian society. [...] I would like to congratulate the author for his detailed research and studies of Sufism and providing original reference material for students, scholars and researchers in the field. - Eliza Tasbihi, McGill University

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## 19th-Century Persian Sufism in its Shiite Milieu

### The Rise of the Safavids and the Establishment of Shi'ism in Iran

The Safavid Empire' was the first and greatest Persian Empire following the Muslim conquest of the Iranian plateau. The first Safavid King, Shah Isma'il (r. 1502-1524), was only 15 years old when he assumed the throne and declared that his realm was to follow the Twelver Shi'i teachings. He required all mosques henceforth to add to the call to prayer the recognition of the Imam 'Ali the cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad, as the true heir to the Prophet by means of the declaration, 'I witness that 'Ali is God's friend (wali Allah). The Safavid kings were able to create stability for Persia. During their reign (907-1135/1501-1722), the Shiite seminary schools in Persia became centres for religious and philosophical sciences, fostered by the Safavid royal policy of inviting Shiite scholars from other Muslim lands to Persia, mostly from the Shi'i centres in Syria, southern Iraq and the Arabian peninsula. The religious and social impact of the Safavids pro-Shi'i policies changed the lives of Persians, who prior to this time were primarily Sunnis.

The shift from Sunni to Shi'i was the great turning point for the religious history of Persia. The enormous efforts of the Safavid kings to develop Shi'ism as an established jurisprudential seminary school in Persia formed a new religious lifestyle for Persians. It is also undeniable that the Safavids had a great effect on the history of Shi'ism through the establishment of Shi'i seminary schools (hawza) especially in Qum, which has been among the most influential centres for theological and jurisprudential studies since Safavid times.

### The Rise of the Qajar Dynasty

After two centuries of Safavid rule, Shah Sultan Husayn's (r. 1074-1101/1694-1722) inability to govern the empire led to the Afghan invasion, which ended in the fall of the Safavids (1135/1722). After the fall of the Safavid dynasty (907-1135/1501-1722), Persia faced several chaotic eras. Although strong charismatic leaders such as ^adir Shah Afshar (d. 1160/1747) and Karim Khan Zand (d. 1193/1779) were able to establish relative stability in their territories, soon after their deaths Persia again faced renewed chaos. These leaders were not able to form strong, long-lasting dynasties. However, a powerful leader, Aqa Muhammad Khan Qajar (r. 1195-1211/1782-1798), was able to consolidate his kingdom and form the Qajar dynasty (1210-1344/1796-1925) which would rule Persia for over a century. From the Safavid time to the Qajar era, the majority of Persians were followers of Twelver Shi'ism, which was inherited from the Safavid era. Shi'ite clerics were more involved in the private and political lives of Shi'ites than Sunni clerics were in the lives of Sunnis. Consequently, there were always powerful clerical elites in Shiite societies, although, in certain periods (especially during Nadir's reign), their powers were reduced. The clerics were not favoured by Nadir and Karim Khan. This was a bitter experience for Shiite clerics, but under the Qajars they managed to regain and even increase their authority. Under Qajar rule the role of the Shi'i clerics became a determining factor for the religious, political and social life of Persians. The Qajar monarchs consistently asked for their help on certain political occasions, and so became indebted to them.

Shi`ite clerics wanted to gain influence and a power that would be independent of the state. They did not want to experience the same bitter treatment which they had endured with Nadir Shah Afshar, who dismissed them from court and did not subsidise their positions. And things only got worse under Karim Khan, who viewed them as parasites on society. Therefore, they formed an independent system that became increasingly powerful, to the extent that, at times, they challenged the power of the state. Shi`ite clerics thus played an important role in the formation of the political, intellectual, religious and mystical milieu of the era.

The animosity of Shi`ite scholars in general and Usuli clerics in particular towards Sufism during the 18th and 19th centuries has been a prominent feature in the social and religious history of early Persia over the past 300 years. There were apogee points of the persecution of Sufism during this period. After the formalisation of the Shi`ite seminary sciences at the end of the Safavid era, the inquisition of Sufism led by Shiite scholars was championed by Majlisi Junior in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. His polemics succeeded in causing the emigration of all the Sufi orders from Persia. During the Afshar and Zand eras, the power of the Shiite clerics waned, and Persia experienced political instability, providing an opportunity for Sufi masters to revive their spiritual doctrines and practices in the main towns of Persia.

However, at the end of the Zand dynasty and at the beginning of the reign of the Qajars, Usuli scholars consolidated their power and started to persecute the Sufis again. The champion of this second inquisition of Sufism was Áqa Muhammad Ali Bihbahani. Sufis were the indirect victims of the libertinism of the Qalandars and wandering dervishes, whose lack of observance of Islamic laws was used by the Shiite scholars as a reason to refute all Sufis. They were also direct victims of their main rivals, the formalist Usuli Shi`ite clerics, who were extremely zealous in maintaining their social and religious authority over the populace at all costs. As a result, it became customary for most Persians to be against Sufism. Rejection of Sufism was no longer just a religious act but became a prestigious and fashionable intellectual position for elites and men of learning to hold, a position which is still largely maintained by intellectuals in contemporary Iranian society today.

The seminary scholars were thus largely successful in their campaign to marginalise Sufis and Sufi masters from the greater society of Persia. Mast `Ali Shah confessed that the majority of the Persian people were against Sufism due to the power of the Usuli clerics over the masses. In his chapter about Isfahan, Mast `Ali Shah stated that although many Sufi masters came from that city, during his own time the majority of the people were against Sufis. He commented as well that:

The general tradition of Persians is that whoever talks about self-mortification, spiritual striving, improvement of morals, and disciplining the carnal soul or follows the path of perfection of the soul, actualization of the spiritual path, purification of the heart, and refinement of the soul, and whoever mentions the term `Sufi Path' (tarfqat), or `Divine Reality' (haqiqat), or the tradition of gnosis, or follows the path of asceticism, piety, submission, acceptance, poverty, and annihilation is to be declared an infidel and heretic without any proof or evidence.

It is undeniable that the clique of anti-Sufi mujtahids delivered a strong blow to both the survival and the revival of the Sufi orders in Persia, especially to the Ni`matullahi order during the Zand and Qajar periods. But unlike in the Safavid era, the Ni`matullahi did not emigrate from Persia during the Qajar period, but rather made superficial changes in their appearance and practices in order to adapt to the oppressive anti-mystical milieu that surrounded them. After Rida `Ali Shah passed away, many of the later Ni`matullahi masters adopted the wearing of the garments of Shi`ite scholars and decreased their

emphasis on Sufi practices that might draw public attention to them. As an example, silent dhikr replaced the practice of loud dhikr sessions. This tactic of dissimulation made them less vulnerable to persecution by Shi'ite scholars who opposed them.

### The Ni`matullahi Order from Ma'sum `Ali Shah to Muzaffar Ali Shah

After a period of social turmoil in Persia under the Safavids during the 16th and 17th centuries, and the ensuing religious inquisition against Sufis, Sufism was almost completely suppressed; only a few Nurbakhshi masters in Mashhad and Dhahabis in Shiraz remained. In the 16th century the Ni`matullahi masters of Persia had immigrated to the Deccan plateau in India. As Amanat states, 'By the end of the seventeenth century the Ni`matullahi, Nuqtavis, Hurufis, and Sufi ghulat had been systemically persecuted and removed from the political scene.' As a result, and as noted above, there was an intermission in Sufi activity in Persia that lasted until the Zand era. As Mast `Ali Shah stated, 'From the middle of Shah Sultan Husayns era to the end of Karim Khans, the tradition of Sufism was abolished in Iran. He continued, 'For approximately sixty years, Iran was devoid of Sufi doctrines and the subtleties of certitude and no one's ear heard the name of the spiritual path (tariqat) and no one's eye saw a person of the spiritual path (ahl-i tariqat)'.

The religious system of society during the Zand and Qajar periods was inherited from the Safavids and was based exclusively on the exoteric aspects of religion. This belief system gave all power to Shiite Usuli scholars. For this reason, only conservative Sufi orders that simultaneously addressed both the exoteric religious and the esoteric spiritual needs of the people could play any open role in Persian society. The Ni`matullahi and Dhahabis were the two major Sufi orders involved in the intellectual and spiritual revival of Sufism during this period. The instability of the political leadership also opened up the opportunity for charismatic Sufi masters to enter Persia and propagate their beliefs. As Foltz observes, 'With the weakening and instability of government, however, came a resurgence of charismatic leadership from among the Sufi brotherhoods, particularly the Ni'matollahis and the Nurbakhshis whose esoteric teachings held sway over a large number of the general population.'

All the three main Sufi orders (Ni`matullahi, Dhahabi and Nurbakhshi) already had their followers scattered around Persia, and indeed Sufism, contrary to Mast `Ali Shah's assertion above, had not been completely eradicated. However, the Sufis had remained dormant underground until the advent of the revival movement. Amanat points out that '[t]he most outstanding example of this revival can be seen in the activities of the Ni`matullahi emissaries, who by the second half of the eighteenth century had attracted a large audience in the southern and central provinces. One of the most crucial acts in the Ni`matullahi' revival movement was the centralisation of the leadership around a few of the charismatic Ni`matullahi masters. Of necessity, these charismatic leaders were aware of the persecution of Sufis by their clerical foes.

Rida `Ali Shah (d. 1214/1799) was the last known master of the Ni`matullahi order in India. Some of the hagiographers of the order believe that he was of Persian descent, but his ancestors had lived long enough in India to be called Deccani. He had not attended any religious seminary schools. He was an ardent Shi'ite and had good relationships with both Muslims and non-Muslims. Living in Indian society during a relatively calm period made him more tolerant towards other religious groups. He felt the need to dispatch some of his disciples to Persia to provide guidance to the remnants of the Ni`matullahi order there, especially after he received complaints from those who sought guidance on the Sufi path but

could not find any Ni`matullahi masters. It has been said that, once in Persia, a sayyid kept seeking to enter the Ni`matullahi path but, after searching far and wide, could not find a master and therefore went to the Deccan. In the Deccan, he complained to Rida `Ali Shah which resulted in him deciding to send a deputy to Iran.<sup>10</sup> It was in 1184/1770 that Rida `Ali Shah Deccan appointed Mir `Abd al-Hamid with the spiritual title of Ma`sum `Ali Shah to propagate the spiritual teachings of the Ni`matullahi order in Persia.<sup>11</sup> Mast `Ali Shah claims that Rida `Ali Shah was the main reason the people of Persia heard about Sufism and were able to meet people of the spiritual path. To a certain extent this statement is accurate, yet Ma`sum `Ali Shah himself played the main role in the return to Persia of the Ni`matullahi order, which soon became one of the most important Sufi orders there. Ma`sum `Ali Shah (Rida `Ali Shah's spiritual deputy) played the crucial role in the revival of the order and trained all the influential masters on whom the continuance of this movement heavily relied. Numerous scholars and poets belonging to the Ni`matullahi order were originally initiated under his guidance.

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As we have seen in this chapter, the period during which these masters led the Ni`matullahi order was far from tranquil. The order faced a great deal of opposition alongside its growing fame. Even when for short periods they were favoured by the rulers of different cities, the Shiite ulama were usually successful in persuading those rulers against giving any support to Sufism with the accusation that the Sufi masters they favoured intended to make a claim on kingship.

However, despite these vicissitudes, the three masters discussed in this chapter were responsible not only for the revival of the Ni`matullahi order in Persia but also for its reformation. Their aim was to revive an esoteric tradition in Persia that had been absent for a long time, and to redirect Sufism back in the right direction. These masters fought against two different classes of society and tried to purify both. On the one hand, they endured opposition from the exoteric religious class who were led by Shiite shariah-minded scholars and yet tried to introduce the inner meaning of religion to them. On the other hand, they struggled against the decadence of the wandering qalandars and libertine Sufis who were careless about observance of the exoteric laws of Islam.

One of the main reasons for the opposition of the Shiite scholars and rulers to the Sufis was the relationship between the masters of the Ni`matullahi order and their disciples. The absolute submission of disciples to their masters implicitly challenged the authority of both the rulers and Shiite seminary scholars. Nur `Ali Shah had clearly stated that the power of the qutb (sole master of the order) was greater than that of any ruler. More essential was their emphasis on the relationship between the Mandi (Twelfth Imam) and the Sufi Master. In certain cases, as explained in the story of Rida `Ali Shah, one of the Imams would command the Sufi master through dreams or visions. The Sufi belief that the seeker should choose his master based on spiritual attraction gave more freedom to the individual seeker than was allowed by the mujtahids.

As Zarrinkub notes, the enthusiastic popular reception of this movement was suppressed by the triumph of the Shi`ite fundamentalist scholars and, in particular, their main champion, Aqa Muhammad `Ali Bihbahani. The historical events would seem to indicate that Aqa Muhammad `Ali Bihbahani and other anti-Sufi scholars were triumphant in suppressing Sufis, but in reality this was not the case. On the one hand, the enthusiastic preaching and propagation of the order by masters such as Ma'sum `Ali Shah, Fayd `Ali Shah, Nur `Ali Shah and Mushtaq `Ali Shah led to its popularity and revival; on the other,



opposition to the order was harsh and there was a desperate need for consolidation for the order to survive the clerical persecution it was subjected to. These masters gained fame among the people because they brought to Persian society a traditional yet new way of thinking that emphasised the inner meaning of religion. Although the people of Persia had become strangers to Sufism, during this historical period of political turmoil, an exoteric religious system could not respond to all the social and spiritual needs of the community.

During these masters' lives, the seat of the leadership of the Ni`matullahi order was in the Deccan. Rida 'Ali Shah was the qutb (pole) of the order for about 60 years, and lived through the revival movement in Persia. He trained those masters who dedicated themselves to its revival, and the historical record shows that the persecution of the Sufis by Shi`ite fundamentalist clerics more or less changed the direction of the order from an enthusiastic movement, which had been based on ecstatic poetry and a Qalandari'ite lifestyle, into an elitist movement providing a new, mystical interpretation of the Shiite seminary sciences. This evolution into a scholarly order even affected the outward appearance of its master, Husayn 'Ali Shah or 'Ajdhub `Ali Shah, who swapped the traditional dervish cloak and hat (taj) for the cleric's gown and turban. As we shall see in the next chapter, Husayn 'Ali Shah even lived in a seminary school as a professor of religious studies for much of his life.

Mast 'Ali Shah's role in the spread of the Ni`matullahi order in Persia was quite different from that of Husayn `Ali Shah and Majdhub `Ali Shah. He was more of a traveller and an acute observer of other cultures than a seminary scholar. When explaining the different schools and philosophies, he exhibited less bias than other scholars of his time, which made him a more accurate and reliable guide. He closely examined different cultural and religious practices, which makes his work an important source from that era. The majority of Shiite Sufi orders had extreme, exclusivist views of religious beliefs and sects other than their own, which they inherited from their Shiite seminary background. The Ni`matullahi Sufi order was not immune to this exclusivism. Mast 'Ali did not criticise the Shiite philosophical schools and, in certain cases, he did not refute the Naqshbandi order, as his predecessors had done.

He was more oppressed and persecuted than his two predecessors in the Ni`matullahi order, as can be seen from the way in which he was expelled from Tehran, Fars and several other cities in Persia. He was more vulnerable to attack because he did not have sufficient knowledge of the seminary sciences and did not write as an expert on religious sciences. Most of his books were more like travel diaries (Siyahat 'ama) than works on Sufism, and his work *Kashf al-ma`arif* was his only apologetic treatise. Majdhub, by contrast, was well versed in the religious sciences, and therefore his books had a larger audience among the ulama. Mast 'Ali's contribution was, for the most part, to elaborate on the beliefs of Majdhub.

Mast `Ali clearly stated his Sufi beliefs and he openly criticised and confronted Shi`ite clerics. He provoked outrage among Shiite clerics with his belief that Sufis were superior to Shiite ulama, because the Sufis had first to gain gnosis under the guidance of Sufi masters.

It should be noted that he was a recognised Sufi and was respected by other Sufi masters during his day. He gained popularity within the Ni`matullahi order when disagreements regarding succession began to emerge, and was very popular among the common people of his time who were not influenced by the verdicts of Shiite scholars. While his contribution to Sufism was not as influential as Majdhub's, his travel diaries remain an invaluable resource on the geographical, historical, social, ethical and mystical milieu of that era.

In a word, these three masters laid the foundations for the Ni`matullahi order to flourish in Persian society, carrying forward the movement started by Rida 'Ali Shah. Under their leadership the order evolved from a charismatic popular Sufi movement into a highly sophisticated mystical philosophy followed by elite members of the Persian intelligentsia. As Ala Annuli notes, 'After a couple of decades they gradually came to terms with this new cultural landscape as their masters transitioned the order towards a more conformist and orthodox-friendly one. Not only did an elite part of the society become Ni`matullahi, but there also emerged a genre of intricately argued Sufi apologies and theological responses to the criticism of the fundamentalist Shiite clerics. The efforts of Ni`matullahi masters who belonged to the scholarly class of seminary scholars, with their knowledge of Shiite seminary sciences and wide reading of traditional Sufi classics, managed to turn the direction of the order and refine its teachings and mystical practices in an intellectually sophisticated manner. As Ata Annuli observes, 'Unlike early masters who were either illiterate or less educated, an advanced level of knowledge in exoteric matters through madrasa training was a routine part of later Ni`matullahi masters' intellectual outlook.' Since Husayn `Ali Shah and Majdhub `Ali Shah belonged to the elite class of Shiite seminary scholars, they were able to create a spiritually and intellectually refined mystical theosophy for their followers. Majdhub's intellectual contribution to Sufism and his apologetic writings created opportunities for Shiite scholars to read and hear the intellectual and seminary response of the Sufis who led the initiation of some Shiite seminary scholars. These scholars were attracted through the philosophy elaborated by the Ni`matullahi masters, which had been inherited from pro-Sufi Safavid Shiite philosophers such as Fayd Kashani, Mulla Sadra and Shaykh Baha' i.

Today, the differences between the exoteric scholars of seminary sciences and Sufis appear as irreconcilable as ever. Since the arrival of Sayyid Ma`sum in Persia almost two and a half centuries ago, the differences and disputes between the two camps have only worsened, at least on the public and political levels. The Ni`matullahi masters' writings, like those of their predecessors of the Safavid period, argued that Shi`ism was the reality of Sufism and that Sufi and Shiite were two different names for the same reality. The Ni`matullahi were among the very few Sufis of their time who openly propagated the philosophy of Ibn `Arabi within Shi`ite culture. Their contribution to Persian Shi`ite culture was vast; and through the reforms introduced by Ni`matullahi masters outlined above Sufis became better able to resist the opposition and harassment of the Shiite clerics. By the time of Mast `Ali Shah's leadership the Ni`matullahi order was a very influential Sufi order in Persia and had established a firm foothold within Persian society, where its followers even included members of the royal court and the respected theologians of the seminary madrasa system. One can conclude that the revivalist movement founded by Rida 'Ali Shah and directed by Ma`sum `Ali Shah would not have reached its perfection and fruition without the leadership of these three figures, who were largely responsible for re-establishing the Ni`matullahi order within Persian society and for its endurance to the present day.

Usuli Shi`ism exercised an extremely strong influence over the theory and practice of the Sufis of the Ni`matullahi order. The first generation of this revival movement, whose champion was the Indian master, Ma`sum `Ali Shah, had not been at all influenced by the Usuli system of theology and its doctrine of taqlid. They identified themselves as followers of the Shiite Imams but abstained from following (taqlid) any Shi`ite clerics. However, the harsh persecution of the Sufis made it inevitable for the Ni`matullahis to put more emphasis on the 'political correctness' of their theological beliefs, and consequently their doctrines grew closer to the mystical philosophy of Shiite seminary scholars. It would

seem that the initiation of some Shi'ite clerics into Sufism and prevention of further persecution were the two main factors leading to this deep infiltration of Shi'ite theology into Ni'matullahi Sufi thought.

The theory of wilaya in traditional Sufism, in which the Sufi master was understood to be a living saint or wali, differed substantially from the concept of wilaya in Shi'ite theology, in which wilaya remained the sole prerogative of the Imams. Accordingly, Ni'matullahi masters of this era sought to amalgamate Shi'ite theology with Sufi beliefs about the theory of Wilaya. Shah Ni'matullah and his successors were known to be the propagators of Ibn 'Arabi's mystical philosophy in Persia. Although Ibn 'Arabi had elaborated a complex theory of Sufi wilaya, since the Ni'matullahi masters after 'a`sum 'Ali Shah were not able to refer directly to writings of Shah Ni'matullah on wilaya — which in turn were based on the Sufi teachings of Ibn 'Arabi - they relied heavily on the Shiite mystic philosophers from the school of Isfahan, whose doctrines were taught in Shiite seminary schools. This direct influence from Shiite seminary scholars sparked a rivalry between Shiite clerics and Sufi masters. Sufi masters came to be viewed as representatives of the Imam for spiritual guidance at the time when there was no access to a living Imam.

Ibn 'Arabi's philosophy of Sainthood (wilayat) was the foundation for the corresponding philosophy within Shi'ite-Sufi culture. Ibn 'Arabi sometimes used the term 'general prophethood' (nubuwwa 'amma) for sainthood (wilayat) after the Prophet Muhammad, which implies the continuation of divine guidance through sainthood.' Hence Sufi saints were considered the only religious guides worthy of the titles of true scholars ('ulama) and true heirs of the Prophet.

Sayyid Haydar Amur, one of the early Shiite mystics, largely adopted the philosophy of Ibn 'Arab. He contended that Sufism and Shi'ism were one reality and not separated. However, Amur criticised Ibn 'Arabi for not recognising the first Shi'ite Imam, 'Ali, as the seal of sainthood (khatam al-wilaya). He always asserted that the Shi'ite Imams were the superior recipients of divine inspiration through sainthood and Sufis received their divine guidance through the Shiite Imams.

The Ni'matullahi masters basically adopted the same theory and philosophy as Sayyid Haydar Amur. 'ur 'Ali Shah presented the Imam 'Ali as 'the seal of the Imamate' (khatm-i imamat), which shows a direct influence from the Akbarian Shiite philosopher, Sayyid Haydar Amuli Sainthood (wilayat) was represented as the charismatic authority of Sufi masters derived through Shiite Imams. This presented a great challenge to the Ussuri system of thought, since these mystics appealed to a different religious authority during occultation from Usuli scholars. As Scharbrodt observes, the Ni'matullahi masters created an amalgamation of the Shiite and Sufi philosophy of sainthood (wi'ayat) by claiming that their spiritual leaders (qutb) were both possessors of sainthood and true representatives of the Shi'ite Imams. The charismatic authority of the Ni'matullahi masters and their claims to sainthood gave them such a venerable status that Shiite scholars criticised them for competing with the charisma of the Shiite Imams. The relationship with the twelfth Imam can be seen as a product of the Usul<sup>^</sup> school of thought: the Shiite seminary scholars claimed to exercise the general deputyship (niyabat-i 'amma) of the Imam, while in contrast the Ni'matullahi masters claimed spiritual contact with the twelfth Imam, which was in theological opposition to Usuli claims. These Ni'matullahi masters, 'ur 'Ali Shah, Muzaffar 'Ali Shah, Husayn 'Ali Shah, Majdhub 'Ali Shah and Mast 'Ali Shah, thus all played crucial roles in the assimilation of the Shiite doctrine of wilayat into Ni'matullahi Sufism.

Today, history has repeated itself. Historically, the current harsh persecution of Sufis in Iran can be seen as stemming from this animosity between fundamentalist Shi`ite scholars and the Ni`matullahi order, which is rooted in centuries of conflict between them. Further research into the roots of these theological and philosophical conflicts should greatly help future generations to mitigate these quarrels and misunderstandings between Shi`ite clerics and Sufi masters. <>

## **MATHEMATICS AND PHYSICS IN CLASSICAL ISLAM: COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES IN THE HISTORY AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE** edited by Giovanna Lelli [Crossroads - History of Interactions across the Silk Routes, Brill, 9789004513143]

This book highlights the emergence of a new mathematical rationality and the beginning of the mathematisation of physics in Classical Islam. Exchanges between mathematics, physics, linguistics, arts and music were a factor of creativity and progress in the mathematical, the physical and the social sciences. Goods and ideas travelled on a world-scale, mainly through the trade routes connecting East and Southern Asia with the Near East, allowing the transmission of Greek-Arabic medicine to Yuan Muslim China. The development of science, first centred in the Near East, would gradually move to the Western side of the Mediterranean, as a result of Europe's appropriation of the Arab and Hellenistic heritage. Contributors are Paul Buell, Anas Ghrab, Hossein Masoumi Hamedani, Zeinab Karimian, Giovanna Lelli, Marouane ben Miled, Patricia Radelet-de Grave, and Roshdi Rashed.

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This volume is the result of a teaching and research project on the history and the philosophy of science of classical Islam initiated at the University of Gent (Belgium) in 2015. It gathers some of the contributions to a series of symposia organised in the same university in honour of Roshdi Rashed as a part of this project. To these contributions, reworked in view of this publication, new ones have been added, which complete and enrich the picture.

With this volume we wish to contribute to the studies on the history and the philosophy of science which consider the development of modern science in Europe in the light of scientific advances achieved earlier in the Arab-Islamic world. From the ninth century, thanks to a massive translation movement, the Arab-Islamic world appropriated the Hellenistic scientific heritage. The advances accomplished by the Arabic sciences varied from one discipline to another and from one branch to another within the same discipline. This volume, which focuses on the mathematical and the physical sciences, highlights some of these advances, mentions concrete examples of them and indicates their general epistemological scope.

Rashed, in his “Science in Islam and Classical Modernity”, examines how the knowledge of Arabic science allows a better understanding of “classical science”. The latter is traditionally considered to be the early modern European science which gradually replaced Aristotelian physics and cosmology with a new rationality characterised by mechanism, mathematisation and experiment. Rashed argues that the new rationality of classical science was introduced earlier by Arabic science between the ninth and the twelfth centuries. This new rationality was both algebraic and experimental. Thanks to al-Khawārizmī (780–850), algebra became an autonomous discipline. Eventually, the generality of its scope allowed the application of various mathematical disciplines to one another: arithmetic to algebra, algebra to arithmetic, both to trigonometry, algebra to the Euclidean theory of numbers, algebra to geometry, geometry to algebra. Rashed mentions effects of these various applications: the development of polynomial algebra, combinatorial analysis, numerical analysis, the numerical resolution of equations, the new theory of numbers, the geometrical constructions of equations and the separation between rational and integer Diophantine analysis. In rational Diophantine analysis an explicit distinction was made

between determinate and indeterminate problems, while in integer Diophantine analysis the infinity of solutions, approximate solutions and the impossibility of solutions were all considered true solutions. These features would be those of Diophantine analysis as understood by Bachet de Mézirac and Fermat in the seventeenth century, after a new appropriation of Hellenistic and Arab mathematics by Europe had begun in the twelfth century through translations into Latin, Hebrew and Italian. As far as the new experimental rationality is concerned, Rashed shows that the work of Ibn al-Haytham (965–1040)<sup>3</sup> is indispensable for understanding the emergence of a new experimental method in late seventeenth century physics in Europe.

Another feature of the sciences of classical Islam, which was tightly related to the new algebraic and experimental rationality, was the emergence of a new relationship between mathematics and physics. Classical Islam inherited the Aristotelian classification of the sciences based on the hierarchical tripartitions of the theoretical sciences into metaphysics, mathematics and physics. Mathematics, for its abstraction from sensual reality, occupied a higher rank than physics, and included arithmetic, geometry, optics, harmonics and astronomy. Physics dealt mainly with changing entities and studied the laws of motion of inanimate bodies, including the celestial ones. It also included biology and psychology.

Hosseini Masoumi-Hamedani, in his “Physics and the Mathematical Sciences in the Islamic Period. A Conceptual and Historical Survey”, shows that not all the Arab-Islamic mathematicians and philosophers agreed with the Aristotelian division of labour. The existence of problems studied both in mathematics and physics is already attested in Aristotle (e.g. in the case of optics). There were scholars in Islam who argued that mathematics plays a fundamental role in philosophical demonstrations or that mathematics can solve problems that cannot be solved by physics alone. This was the case of Ibn al-Haytham, whose optics included experiments and a combination of mathematics and physics, as it is attested to not only in his great book of Optics, but also in other specific works like a group of treatises on the light of the moon. Masoumi-Hamedani concludes by saying that the problematic nature of the relationship between mathematics and physics in classical Islam allows a better understanding not only of

the history of science in Islam, but also of the history of early modern science (i.e. classical science).

In his article “Ibn al-Haytham: between Mathematics and Physics”, Rashed explains, in a more detailed manner, the meaning of this new combination between mathematics and physics. In astronomy, Ibn al-Haytham, having found contradictions in Ptolemy, established a totally geometrical celestial kinematics, independent of cosmological considerations and of Aristotelian dynamics. The result was a model of the apparent motion of the “seven planets” halfway between Ptolemy and Kepler. In optics, Ibn al-Haytham reformed the optics of Euclid and Ptolemy, which was a geometry of perception, and modified the doctrine of the Islamic Aristotelian philosophers of Islam, who considered the forms perceived by the eye as “totalities” transmitted by the objects under the effect of light. He separated the theory of vision from the theory of light and established experimentally that light propagates independently of vision from illuminated objects onto the eye in straight lines and, he assumed, with great speed. In so doing, he founded a totally geometrical optics. The advances he accomplished in astronomy and optics were similar: he mathematised these disciplines and combined this mathematisation with the ideas of the physical phenomena.

Anas Ghrab, in his “La musique parmi les sciences dans les textes arabes médiévaux”, deals with the position occupied by music in the Arab-Islamic system of knowledge. Before acquiring the status of an autonomous discipline, music was considered by most of the Arab authors as part of the mathematical sciences, according to the Aristotelian pattern. Aristotelian philosophers like al-Fārābī (878–950) and Avicenna (980–1037), relying upon Euclid and Ptolemy, observed that music shared elements with physics, because of the physical nature of sounds. In this respect Ghrab highlights another aspect of the relationship between different branches of mathematics and between mathematics and physics in classical Islam. He also refers to the impact of classical Islam in later research in music by the European scholarship of the Renaissance and beyond.

Zeinab Karimian, in her “Traditional and Modern Science in an Age of Transition: ^Ali Muhammad Isfahan and the Logarithm of Numbers”, analyses the case of an Iranian

mathematician who, after having received an education in traditional mathematics, studied modern European mathematics and sciences at the Dār al-Funün, a polytechnic founded by the Qajar dynasty in 1851. Al-I Ffahñi, who introduced a more sophisticated method of interpolation in the calculation of logarithms, is an example of how classical mathematics was still able to dialogue with modern mathematics in the nineteenth century. It was an age of transition. Eventually, in the course of the twentieth century, European modern mathematics would be appropriated by the entire world.

If the writings of Rashed and Masoumi-Hamedani highlight relevant developments and advances of mathematics and physics in classical Islam with respect to the Hellenistic age, the writings of Marouane ben Miled, Patricia Radelet-de Grave and ours refer more specifically to the interdisciplinary openness of the Arab-Islamic culture as a factor of creativity and progress in mathematics, physics and the social sciences. Of course, interdisciplinary openness was not a specific feature of classical Islam. On the contrary, the tendency to hyper-specialisation and to a growing gap even between different branches of the same disciplines is a very recent feature of the culture of the twentieth century.

In his “Formalism and Language in the Beginning of Arabic Algebra”, ben Miled deals with the influence of grammar and lexicography on al-Khawārizmī’s algebra. The latter acts as an empty language in which both arithmetic and geometry can be expressed. The notion of “qiyās” (analogy) was originally a formal rule of grammar, then of jurisprudence, before it became a formal rule of algebra. This formalisation opened the way, with the successors of alKhawārizmī, to research in algebraic proofs.

In her two writings, Radelet-de Grave highlights the fertility of interdisciplinary openness from a wider diachronic perspective. In “Art and Mathematics, Two Different Paths to the same Truth”, Radelet-de Grave analyses the classifications of Arabic abstract designs made by Hermann Weyl (1885–1955) and Andreas Speiser (1885–1970) based on the symmetries that organise them. For example, it is about abstract designs of Alhambra fortress in Muslim Spain (thirteenth-fourteenth centuries), which belong to a tradition of geometric motifs that goes back to ancient Egypt. The work of



classification of groups made by Weyl and Speiser contributed largely to the spreading out of group theory in twentieth century mathematics.

The notions of group and of symmetry are deeply connected. A symmetry group is the set of all geometrical transformations under which the group remains unchanged or invariant. The fundamental mathematical idea of Arab-Islamic designs is indeed “invariance”, which means that motifs remain the same after a transformation in the plane: displacement, rotation or reflection. Radelet-de Grave argues that they were the product of a deep mathematical reflection, observing that all possible transformations of certain symmetry groups can be found in Arab geometric designs.

In her article “The prehistory of the Principle of Relativity”, Radelet-de Grave shows that the same notion of “invariance” was essential to the emergence of a crucial notion of modern physics, namely Galilean relativity which says that the fundamental laws of physics are invariant in all frames of reference moving with constant velocity with respect to each other. Galileo (1564–1642) demonstrated it by carrying out various experiments on a ship; first when the ship was at rest, and then he repeated the same experiments when the ship was moving with constant velocity and he observed that the results of the experiments are the same in both cases. The prehistory of the notion of invariance, essential to this principle can be found in Arab designs, although their invariance does not refer to transformations in the physical space but in the geometric plane. The notion of invariance has been applied subsequently by Huygens (1629–1695) to obtain the laws of collisions, by Lorenz (1853–1928) to obtain the coordinate transformations for space-time and by Einstein (1879–1955) to formulate special relativity then general relativity.

Relying upon her analysis of the origin of invariance in Arab geometric designs, Radelet-de Grave advances a general hypothesis of philosophy of science, according to which fundamental scientific ideas are perennial and universal, although, dare we say, they can be formally theorised only when they find mature and favorable historical conditions.

Our article on “Intersections between Social and Scientific Thought. The Notion of Muraqaba in the Muqaddima of Ibn Khaldün” points out that the materialist

historiography of Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406) did not always distinguish clearly between the social laws, the mathematical laws and the physical laws. In an analogous manner, the European materialist philosophy during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries (Hobbes, Locke, Hume) did not clearly distinguish between the laws of nature on one side and the laws of man and society on the other side. In Europe, this feature characterised an age of transition toward a modern division of labour between the natural sciences, which use the experimental scientific method, and the social sciences, which deal with historical facts that change qualitatively and quantitatively in time. If in Europe materialistic philosophies could engage in this transition with success thanks to the favourable circumstances of emerging capitalism, this was not the case for the Arab society at the time of Ibn Khaldūn, surrounded by social decay and human distrust.

Finally, the article by Paul Buell on “Arabic Medicine in China: Context and Content” deals with the reception of Arab-Greek medicine, a physical science within the Aristotelian pattern, by the Yuan Mongol Muslim dynasty in China (thirteenth century) and beyond. The article intends to highlight the positive role of the Mongols in spreading goods, technologies and ideas, and reminds us that classical Islam was engaged in international exchanges on a world scale.

To conclude, this volume presents various aspects of the history of Arabic mathematics and physics in the classical era from a comparative perspective. It expounds on advances and ruptures of classical Islam with respect to Hellenism, and namely the emergence of a new mathematical rationality, which was both algebraic and experimental, and the beginning of the mathematisation of physics. These were the features of classical science as it was understood and practiced in Europe until the end of the seventeenth century, after Europe had engaged in its own appropriation of Arabic and Hellenistic mathematics and physics as early as the twelfth century. Advances and ruptures varied from one discipline to another and from one branch to another within the same discipline. Also, we have pointed out that the interdisciplinary openness of classical Islam was a factor of creativity and contributed to advances in the scientific and social thought.

Classical Islam, which extended from Muslim Spain to the borders of China, was centered in the Near East, where it replaced and developed the Hellenistic civilisation that had flourished after the unification of that region by Alexander the Great. It was in the ninth century-Baghdad that translation of the Hellenistic heritage into Arabic took place. Classical Islam, like Hellenism, benefited from a unique geographical position for being the only region directly connected with all the areas of the ancient world: China, India, Western Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa. The transmission and development of scientific thought was centered in the Near East and gradually moved to the Western side of the Mediterranean as result of Europe's appropriation of the Arabic and Hellenistic heritage. However, technologies, goods and ideas travelled on a world-scale, and namely through the maritime and terrestrial trade routes connecting Eastern and Southern Asia with the Near East. Buell's article in this volume reminds us of the importance of these routes in the transmission of Greek-Arabic medicine to China.

From the fifteenth century onward, as a consequence of the circumnavigation of Africa, the opening of new maritime routes enabled Western Europe to be connected with Eastern and Southern Asia without passing by the intermediary of the Near East. The latter lost progressively the centuries-long benefit of its unique geographical position. In the second half of the eighteenth century, Western Europe was transformed by an unprecedented political, economic, social and cultural development. This was the framework in which, thanks to Newton's unification of mechanics, magnetism and optics, modern science came to be. For its unifying project, the potential of its technological applications, the support it received from scientific institutions and its impact on the philosophical thought, modern science, and particularly mathematics and physics, differed from classical science. After having been European for three centuries, modern science was gradually appropriated by the rest of the world, until it became what it is today: global science. <>

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