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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. <>

Love in the Teachings of Ibn 'Arabi by Hany T. A. Ibrahim [Monographs in Arabic and Islamic Studies, Equinox Publishing, ISBN 9781800502154]

his book aims to explore the theory of love in the writings of the Great Andalusian Sufi Sheikh, Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī (558-638/1165-1240). It begins by examining Divine and human love as found in the works of many Sufi masters that preceded Ibn 'Arabī, and then turns to the views of Ibn 'Arabī himself. The Sufis from the early centuries of Islam (9th-10th) sometimes defined love as their "religion," by which they meant, their way to God. Ibn 'Arabī not only expanded on these earlier Sufi theories, but also detailed his own original insights. He openly declared the primacy of love over all else and argued that love is the dynamic force behind creation. The present study is focused primarily on outlining the importance of Divine love in Ibn 'Arabī's thought, which is accomplished through an in-depth reading and a close textual analysis of selected works on Divine love in several of his key works including: The Interpreter of Longings (Turjumān al-Ashwāq), The Ringstones of Wisdom (Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam), and The Meccan Openings (al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya). The approach taken in Love in the Teachings of Ibn 'Arabī demonstrates the centrality of love in Ibn 'Arabī's worldview. Additionally, the monograph offers certain interpretive keys to help unlock the meanings embedded in the imagery and symbolism of Ibn 'Arabī's unique language.

Reviews

Hany Ibrahim's Love in the Teachings of Ibn 'Arabī adds a great degree of depth to our understanding of Ibn 'Arabī's unique doctrine of love, effectively demonstrating his indebtedness to and departures from treatments of the topic by some of the foremost representatives of the Islamic mystical tradition. This excellent book is highly recommended to all those interested in love, loverhood, and the connection between them. —Mohammed Rustom, author of Inrushes of the Heart: The Sufi Philosophy of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt

This erudite work presents a comprehensive overview of Ibn 'Arabi's doctrine of love, drawing on a range of difficult primary texts and relevant secondary scholarship. As the first monograph of its kind in English, marked by what can only be described as an inner sensitivity to the subject matter--the dhawq of the Sufis--it will help set the stage for future research in the field. —Atif Khalil, author of Repentance and the Return to God: Tawba in Early Sufism

Accessible and profound, erudite and eloquent, Love in the Teachings of Ibn 'Arabī provides an excellent introduction to one of the central themes of the works of the figure known as the Shaykh al-Akbar (the Greatest Master): love. Helpfully situating Ibn al-'Arabī's writings on love within their historical and intellectual contexts, as well as the context of his broader metaphysics and cosmology, Ibrahim's book will find a welcome audience among both scholars and lay readers. — Oludamini Ogunnaike, author of Deep Knowledge: Ways of Knowing in Sufism and Ifa, Two West African Intellectual Traditions

Dr. Hany Ibrahim is uniquely qualified to guide the reader into the world of Ibn al-ʿArabī, where we discover the source of creation, the physics of the cosmos, and the driving force of humanity to be love. Situating Ibn al-ʿArabī in his Islamic foundations, this book takes us through the rich background from which springs Ibn al-ʿArabī powerful, and encouraging, demonstration of the importance of love, which is the way we learn who we are - and who our Lord is. —Eric Winkel, director of The Futūḥāt Project

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In this work I have followed the journey of the life, writings, and teachings of the great Sufi master Ibn 'Arabi. It ranges from Ibn `Arabi's early works and his encounters with the Sufi saints beginning in the late 12th century and continued until his advanced writings on metaphysics and mysticism in the early 13th century. Both of these latter elements were intimately related to his understanding of both human and Divine love. Historically, many Sufis in the years before Ibn 'Arabi had expressed various views on love. In their explorations, they adapted sayings of the Prophet, Qur'anic verses, and the Qudsi hadiths. Ibn 'Arabi himself was no exception to this endeavor. Not only did he develop the insights of previous Sufi masters by clarifying and expanding their ideas, but he also outlined his own views based on his personal illuminations. Furthermore, Ibn `Arabi's extensive use of the Qur 'an and hadith demonstrates that his views on love were not extraneous to the mainstream Islamic discourse. Instead, they were the result of his visionary mystical experiences resulting from both his meditation and engagement with the principal sources of Islamic thought.

In Chapter Two, I began my work by examining love as it is presented in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. I developed my study of love by exploring the Sufi literature that preceded Ibn 'Arabi. I also described how he both elaborated and refined earlier Sufi theories by introducing his own interpretations of religious scripture. In all of these, Ibn 'Arabi acknowledged the primacy of love that lay at the heart of his mystical experiences.

In this chapter, I focused on two verses of the Qur 'an and three hadiths which have been extensively cited by Sufis in their intimate literature on love. At the beginning of the Qur'anic verse, it is pronounced that, "God will summon people whom He loves" (Q. 5:54). With this statement, it becomes evident that the love of God in human beings has its origin in God's own love for them. In contrast, the verse ends with the phrase, "and who love Him." This further statement implies a response on the part of human beings of their own love of God. The Qur'an also states how this love, on the part of human beings, is embodied in the verse, "if you love God, follow me, God will love you and forgive your sins" (Q. 3:31). This verse indicates that the Divine intention is to bestow God's own love on human beings, which is secured by following the path of the Prophet. Ibn `Arabi develops his perception of such a thematic ideal of love that was often expressed by the earlier Sufi saints, which he will subsequentially extend and enrich.

These verses are complemented by several hadiths which I regard as very expressive in revealing further emphasis on the gift of God's love for human beings. The first is that of the hadith qudsi, namely that concerning the "supererogatory prayers" (nawafil), which include a revelation from God, saying, "until I love him" (hata uhibahu). These words evoke acts of devotion that go beyond the requirements of duty, that is the nawafil, to further highlight the gift of God's love to human beings. This hadith continues by then stating, "when I love him" (fa idha ahbabtuhu). It then becomes obvious that those who act in this way receive the reward of God's love.

The second hadith is the famous non-canonical hadith qudsi of the "Unknown Treasure" (kanzan lam u 'raj), which expresses God's love as the reason that inspires creation. The first part says, "I loved to be known, so, I created creatures" (fa-ahbabtu an u`raffa-khalaqtu al-khalq). Such a declaration affirms that love is the sole cause of existence. This hadith of the "Unknown Treasure," has been cited frequently in many Sufi texts, and Ibn 'Arabi also invokes this hadith which expresses that love is both the reason and purpose of creation.

Finally, the third hadith affirms that, "God is Beautiful, and He loves beauty" (inna Allaha jamilun yuhibbu al-jamal). This hadith describes the inseparable connection between love and beauty. Since beauty is also regarded as an aspect of Divine love, the etymological connection between "benevolence" (ihsan), and "beauty" (husn), suggests that virtue beautifies the soul and, accordingly, attracts love. It is from this extant Divine beauty, in Ibn 'Arabi's words, that Divine love and knowledge together come into existence.

In the Third chapter, I undertook a close reading of select themes on love found in Ibn 'Arabi's earlier works, such as The Interpreter of Longings (Turjuman al-Ashwaq) and The Ringstones of Wisdom (Fusus al-Hikam). In such works, Ibn 'Arabi again situates love at the heart of Sufism and Islam. This is evident when he writes that love is the greatest human yearning (shahwah). The indispensable task for human beings is to follow the spiritual path that God, both as Lover and Beloved, has inspired them to follow and to assist them in realizing Oneness in Him.

In this chapter, I also explained how Ibn 'Arabi acknowledges that the heart of the lover and the "Knower of God" (al- `arif bi-llah) who has attained the realization of the "Oneness in God," is capable of recognizing the various theophanies of God in creation. This capacity requires that the human lover always act with propriety and courtesy (adab) towards the countless Divine variations of God's manifestations. However, Ibn 'Arabi also declared, as we saw, that the human lover should not reduce God to only one mode of self-disclosure, since God must be recognized by the lover in every religious tradition. This is in keeping with Ibn 'Arabi's acknowledgment of pluralism in Islam, the Qur'anic basis of which lies in the verse, "For each of you we have made a Law and a way of life. If God had willed, He would have made you into a single community" (Q 5:48). I consider that, with these sacred words, Ibn 'Arabi introduces a type of dialectical process from which new interpretations can emerge, and possibly new pluralistic theologies could later arise.

In Chapter Four, I outlined the ontological developments that helped define Ibn 'Arabi's use of symbolic language. Here, I undertook a demanding analysis of his metaphysical worldview at the center of which stands the doctrine of the "Oneness of Being." It is clear that Ibn 'Arabi own visionary experiences can only be properly understood in light of the doctrine in question. The originality of his explication of this doctrine immeasurably enriched the way later Muslims came to understand—both as proponents of opponents of his views—the idea of tawhid, the principal belief of Islam.

In this chapter I also explained how Ibn 'Arabi understood the nature of the Divine Essence (dhat), the Attributes (sifat), Being (wujud), the five Divine presences (al-hadarat al-ilahiyyah), and the "Perfect Human" (al-insan al-kamil), and, more importantly, the relation of these elements to his theory of love.

In Chapter Five, my focus shifted to an engagement with certain Chapters of The Meccan Openings (al-Futuhat al-Makkiyyah), most importantly Chapter 178. In this encyclopedic work, Ibn 'Arabi exhaustively outlines key elements of his cosmology, metaphysics, hermeneutics, and theology, and their relationship with both Divine and human love. Ibn `Arabi also affirms that love has a distinctive desire for the non-existent (ma'dum). This involves the agency of the imaginative and spiritual latent powers bestowed by God on human beings. For Ibn 'Arabi, this involves a quest by the human lover to generate the non-existent beloved entity of God Himself into the loving "Oneness of Being." This confirms that the goal of the human being's love for God is attained when the Divine lover realizes that nothing exists except God, and that the relative love relationship between the lover and the beloved constitutes a relationship which occurs within the very Essence of God. In this way, Ibn 'Arabi introduced distinct dimensions of Divine love that had not been expressed previously in the Islamic tradition. These mystical elements of love include a division of love into four entities, namely, Divine love, spiritual love, natural and elemental love, all of which taken together comprise the various aspects of love relationships. These divisions, as outlined by Ibn `Arabi, represent one of the most important appraisals of the relationship of human and Divine love to emerge in the Sufi tradition.

From my readings of Ibn 'Arabi I have come to understand that his writings present an unconventional approach that differs from the main interpretative traditions of his time. Part of this was because he relied mainly on the knowledge he had gained from his own spiritual unveilings (kashf) to interpret scripture. My work has followed the maturing of what I consider to be Ibn `Arabi's original insights on the way to his distinctive esoteric illuminations of Divine love. I have attempted to clarify what I have understood to be Ibn `Arabi's unique mystical and spiritual intuitions. This approach has helped me to foresee the manner in which Ibn `Arabi's love of both God and human beings has enriched the multiple understandings of love, both human and Divine. Finally, I envisage that this movement could introduce a new dynamic of understanding for Ibn `Arabi's visionary enrichments of mystical scriptures.

***

In The Meccan Openings, Ibn 'Arabi describes the essential traits of lovers in detail, of which there are fifty-eight traits. These traits are poetic in nature and are challenging to discern in English. Many of these qualities, as mentioned in Chapter Five, provide a thorough list of the physical, emotional, spiritual traits, and various experiences of the Divine lover.

Ibn 'Arabi has presented an analogy between human and Divine love. The modern reader may in fact be struck by the similarities of the qualities shared by the lover of God and that of another human. However, for Ibn 'Arabi, this likeness is because he understands human love to reflect Divine love.

The following is a list of the essential traits of lovers as stated by Ibn `Arabi in Chapter 178.

List of the essential traits of lovers (nu'ut al-muhibun):

(1) Maqtul: Slayed or killed, figuratively speaking, by one's love of God.

(2) Sa'ir 'ilayh bi 'asma 'ih: Wayfaring to God through His names.

(3) Tayyar: In flight by being in a spiritual or emotional flight to God.

(4) Da'im al-sahar: Constantly remaining awake at night in prayer or in an intimate conversation with the Beloved.

(5) Kamin al-ghamm: Concealing grief.

(6) Raghib ft al-khuruj min al-dunya ila liqa ' mahbubih: Desiring to departure from this world to meet with the Beloved.

(7) Mutabarrim bi-suhbat ma-yahul baynahu wa bayna liqa' mabbubih: Complaining of foreign companionship that distracts him or her from the Beloved.

(8) Kathir aka 'awwuh: Frequently sighing.

(9) Yastarihu ila kalam mahbubih wa dhikruhu bi tilawat dhikruhu: Finding comfort and repose in the words of the Beloved by remembering Him and reciting His words (the Qur 'an).

(10) Muwafiq li-mahab maiibubih: Successful in fulfilling the obligations of the Beloved.

(11) Kha 'if min tack al-hurma ft iqamat al-khidmah: Fearful of infringing or falling in the service of the Beloved.

(12) Yastaqil al-kathir min nafsih ft haqq Rabbih: Belittling oneself and feeling deficient in fulfilling the rights and obligations of the Lord.

(13) Yastakthir al-qalil min habibih: Abounding scarce provisions from the Beloved as being copious and plentiful.

(14) Yu aniq ta 'at mahbubih wa yuranib mukhalafatih: Wholeheartedly obeying the Beloved and turning away from what is disagreeable to Him.

(15) Kharij 'an nafsih bil kulliyyah: Being totally self-negated for the sake of the Beloved.

(16) La yatlub al-diyyah ft qatlih: Not seeking any reward or blood-money for being slayed for the sake of the Beloved.

(17) Yasbir `ala al-darra"allati yanfirr minha al-tab' lima kalafahumahbubih min tadbir: Remaining patient in the face of any harm that comes from observing the Beloved's commandments even if they oppose one's natural disposition.

(18) Ha 'im al-qalb: Having an infatuated heart.

(19) Mu'thir mahbubih `ala kull mashub: Preferring the companionship of the Beloved over all else.

(20) Maki ft ithbat: Effaced in affirmation by being annihilated in one's love for the Beloved.

(21) Qad wata 'a nafsahu lima yuridahu bih mahbubih: Familiarizing oneself with the obligations of the Beloved.

(22) Mutadakhil al-sifat: The lover's attributes merge and intertwined with the Beloved's Attributes.'

(23) Ma lahu nafs ma 'a mahbubih: Not having a soul desire with the Beloved.

(24) Kulluhu li mahbubih: Belonging entirely to the Beloved.

(25) Ya `tib nafsahu bi nafsih fi haqq mahbubih: Blaming oneself for falling short in fulfilling the rights of the Beloved.

(26) Multadh fi dahash: Experiencing enjoyment while being astound from the Beloved.

(27) Jawaza al-hudud ba'd hifziha: Being at ease with the Beloved by intruding the boundaries after guarding and preserving them.

1. (28) Ghayyur mahbubih minhu: Being jealous from oneself in loving the Beloved.

(28) Yahkum hubbih fih 'ala qadr 'aqlih: To govern one's love according to the rationalism and intellect of oneself.

(29) Jurhihi jabbar: To heal quickly from any inflictions caused by the Beloved.

(30) La yaqbal hubbih al-ziyadah bi-ihsan al-mahbub wa la yanqus bi-jifa'ih: Not allowing one's love to increase by any beneficence nor decrease by any aversion from the Beloved.

(31) Nasi hazahu wa haz mahbubih: Disregarding and neglecting any rewards for oneself or for the Beloved.

(32) Ghayr matlub bil- 'adab: Not required to be decent.

(33) Makhlu al-nu ut: Having no self-attributes.

(34) Mafia al- 'asma': Nameless and unknown.

(35) Ka'annahu sail wa lays bi sa'il: As if in need but not needing.

(36) La yufarriq bayn al-wag wal-hajr: Not discerning between jointure or abandonment from the Beloved.

(37) Hayman mutayyam fi idlal: Being infatuated and enchanted indulgently.

(38) Dhu tashwish kharij 'an al-wazn: Uncontrollably confused and unbalanced.

(39) Yaqul 'an nafsih 'annahu 'ayn mahbubih: Professing that he or she is the essence of the Beloved.

(40) Mustalim majhud la yaqul li-mahbubih lima fa `alta kadha aw qulta kadha: Captivated relentlessly by submitting to the Beloved and not asking Him why did you do or say so.

(41) Mahtuk al-sitr sirruhu `alaniyyah fadihahu al-dahrr la ya `lam al-kitman: Exposed, scandalized and not holding back any secrets concerning love.

(42) La ya `lam annahu muhibb: Does not know that he or she is a lover.

(43) Kathir al-shawq la yadri liman: Desiring a lot but not knowing for whom.

Ibn 'Arabi further lists fourteen additional qualities, but without detailed description:

(1) Azim al-wajd wa la yadri fi man: Feeling intense emotions but without knowing towards whom.

(2) La yatamayyazu lahu mahbubuh: His Beloved is not defined specifically.

(3) Masrur mahzun mawsuf bi al-diddayn: Characterized by contra dictory feelings such as being happy and sad at the same time.

(4) Maqamuhu al-kharas haluhu yutarjim `anhu: Remaining silent so that one's condition speaks for itself.

(5) La yuhibb al-Wad: Does not want any compensation.

(6) Sakran la yashu: Drunk and never sober.

(7) Muraqib mutaharri li-maradih: Attentive in seeking the Beloved's contentment.

(1) (8) Mu'thir fi al-mahbub al-rahma bihi wal-shafaqah lima yu'tih shahid Prefers mercy and compassion from the Beloved whenever required.

(8) Dhu ashjan: High on emotion.

(9) Kullama faragha nasab la ya `rif al-ta 'ab: Whenever free from distractions the lover diligently and tirelessly strives again for the Beloved.

(10) Ruhuhu `atiyyah wa badanuhu matiyyah: Spiritually generous and materially kind and unselfish.

(11) La ya lam shay' siwa ma fi nafs mahbubih: Does not know anything except what is in the Beloved's self.

(12) Qarir al- `ayn: Finds content in seeing the Beloved.

(13) La yatakalamu ilia bi kalamuhu: Utters only the words of the Beloved. <>

LETTERS OF A SUFI SCHOLAR: THE CORRESPONDENCE OF 'ABD AL-GHANI AL-NABULUSI, 1641-1731 by Samer Akkach [Islamic History and Civilization, Brill, ISBN 9789004171022]

As a leading Muslim thinker, ʻAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī of Damascus creatively engaged with the social, religious, and intellectual challenges that emerged during the early modern period in which he lived. Yet, at a time of high anti-mystical fervour, his Sufi-inspired views faced strong local antipathy. Through extensive correspondence, presented here for the first time, ʻAbd al-Ghanī projected his ideas and teachings beyond the parochial boundaries of Damascus, and was thus able to assert his authority at a wider regional level. The letters he himself selected, compiled, and titled shed fresh lights on the religious and intellectual exchanges among scholars in the eastern Ottoman provinces, revealing a dynamic and rigorous image of Islam, one that is profoundly inspired by humility, tolerance, and love.

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While in Jerusalem during his major journey, `Abd al-Ghanï al-Nãbulusï of Damascus (d. 1731 CE) received a letter from Ibn `Abd al-Razzãq, a devoted disciple whom he described as "our spiritual son." Towards the end of the long letter, which passionately describes how much he misses his beloved master, Ibn `Abd al-Razzãq cites a line of poetry, which reads:

> Though our bodies have been placed far apart
> the distance between the hearts remains close.

The line eloquently describes how space is not always a medium of separation, how nearness and remoteness are not always measured by distance, and how distancing the body does not necessarily affect the closeness of the heart. `Abd al-Ghanï's letters, presented here for the first time, are in many ways about closeness and distancing in social space, about the paradoxes of foreignness among close peers and intimacy among distant colleagues, and about the power of pen-friendship in bringing together individuals distanced in body but close in heart.

The correspondence of `Abd al-Ghanï documented here is selective, excluding his exchanges with his disciples as well as a range of other letters. Written over a period of twenty-nine years, the letters included in this collection were selected, compiled, and titled by the author himself as Wasã'il al-Tahqïq wa Rasã'il al-Tawfïq (The Means of

Truth-Seeking and the Letters of Providential Guidance). As means of truth-seeking, the letters tell personal stories, map regional interests, and engage with hotly debated issues of the time, thereby shedding significant light on the intellectual exchange taking place in the Middle East during the early modern period. As letters of providential guidance, they reveal `Abd al-Ghanï's religious wisdom, spiritual authority, and wide influence as one of the leading Muslim thinkers of the time.

It is not uncommon for radical or controversial thinkers to face opposition and hostility from their conventional, and often more powerful, adversaries, nor is it unusual for a religious or political establishment to dogmatically protect itself under the threat of new ideas. In a sense, this is an aspect of `Abd al-Ghanï's life experience that is indirectly told by the letters of the Wasã'il. Although he was not radical or controversial himself, `Abd al-Ghanï championed the ideas and teachings of a highly controversial thinker, Ibn `Arabï (d. 1240 CE). He also passionately advocated for truth and social justice, and was open to the new social practices, such as smoking, drinking coffee, using musical instruments, and public entertainment, that began to transform urban life in many Ottoman cities, including his home town, Damascus. Not only did he adopt such new social practices but he also wrote lengthy treatises on their legality according to Islamic law. These were highly sensitive topics at the time and his letters show how uncompromising his position was on these matters regardless of the negative impact such a position had on the popularity of his works.

In contrast to the preaching approach of other mystics, who often lament people's preoccupation with worldly affairs but themselves refrain from entering social and religious battlefields, `Abd al-Ghanï remained, for most of his life, actively engaged in the socio-religious affairs of the Damascenes, taking on the religious establishment, and writing against corrupt officials and ignorant jurists (fuqahã'). Aware of the growing complexity and demands of urban life, and especially the growing sophistication of urban learning, he often criticised the narrow-mindedness of the fuqahã', once describing them as "villagers and tradesmen" (ahl al-qurã wa arbãb al-hiraf).

Through his prodigious output, `Abd al-Ghanï achieved fame and exerted influence over a wide circle of followers, yet he also faced much aversion, antagonism, and hostility from the religious establishment. We do not know the specific details of the circumstances and events that led to this situation, but we do know the hotly debated issues about which he passionately wrote. But the issues in themselves do not tell the full story. The bitterness of his many scathing attacks on members of the religious establishment suggests something more than just differences of opinion. Of course, local rivalry accounts for aspects of the attitudes of the religious establishment towards him, but there appear to be other, veiled complexities in the ambivalent relationship he had with the city and its people throughout his long life. The situation must have been so dire that it seems to have compelled the young, cheerful, and convivial scholar, while still in his twenties, to withdraw from public life and abandon social interaction, and later plunged him into a long period of depression.

Yet, even in retreat, he was not left alone. Away from people, he found himself obliged to explain his absence. In the treatise he wrote to do just this, he described the dead authors whose books he was reading in his seclusion as “the living ones,” and his living contemporaries, whom he chose to abandon, as “the dead ones.”2 `Abd al-Ghanï was not isolated in this view. In the memoir of his trip to Tripoli (Tarãblus), his colleague and friend Ramadãn al-`Utayfï presented a lengthy introduction studded with citations of poetry on the disregard and disrespect with which individuals are often treated in their home town, in contrast to the great respect and appreciation they receive abroad.

Against this background, `Abd al-Ghanï’s correspondence appears to have, in addition to its explicit religious motive, an implicit sociopolitical purpose: it was a response to the alienation he suffered over extended periods of his life. Such was the severity of his isolation in Damascus that he once wrote, “I felt extremely alienated from all people, as I could not find anyone who would agree with me on clear matters of truth, let alone anyone who would support me.”3 It is little wonder, therefore, that he refers to his correspondents in the Wasãhil as “the folks of fairness” (ahl al-insãf). The circle of the folks of fairness comprised mainly regional scholars and officials, Arabs and Turks, some of them high ranking in the Ottoman administration, who respected `Abd al-Ghanï’s spirituality, esteemed his knowledge, and valued his wisdom.

The collection of letters presented here does not include all the letters `Abd al-Ghanï wrote and received in his life, but a selection that are concerned with religious matters, following what he considered to be the tradition of the early masters. Through his extensive correspondence and epistolary exchange, `Abd al-Ghanï was able to project his ideas and teachings beyond the restrictive, parochial boundaries of Damascus, to impose a regional religious and intellectual authority, and to reveal aspects of his personality and inner struggle not captured in any of his otherwise dispersed autobiographical notes.

Wasã'il al-Tahqïq wa Rasã'il al-Tawfïq (The Means of Truth-Seeking and the Letters of Providential Guidance) is a collection of seventy-two letters that `Abd al-Ghanï wrote and received between 1675 CE and 1703 CE. His correspondents were Arab and Turkish friends, colleagues, mystics, high-ranking officials, and individuals unknown to him, all residing outside Damascus in various cities in the region (see map in the section Places, Towns, and Correspondents). `Abd al-Ghanï selected, complied, and titled the collection himself, and cited the title in the list of works he included in al-Haqïqa wa al-Majãz, the travel memoirs of his major journey to Syria, Egypt, and Hijãz. He listed the Wasã'il under his writings on divine sciences (fann al-haqïqa al-ilãhiyya). None of the three manuscripts used here mentions the date the original text was completed; they give only the date of copying. From his travel memoirs, however, we know that ‘Abd al-Ghanï listed his works in the license (ijãza) he granted, during the journey, to Sidon’s jurisconsult, shaykh Rudwãn b. al-Hãjj Yüsuf al-Sabbãgh, on 16 War 1105 x/14 November 1693 CE. Had the Wasã'il already been completed by this date, it would have included only fifty-five letters. Clearly, `Abd al-Ghanï continued to work on the Wasã'il after his return to Damascus in early 1106 x/ late 1694 CE. Based on these dates, and taking into account the change from the first to the third person in the headings of the last five letters, it is likely that the original text of the Wasã'il was an ongoing compilation that was stopped around or shortly after 1703 CE, the date of the second last letter. Then, `Abd al-Ghanï would have been sixty-four years old and still living at the family home near the Umayyad great mosque. Around that time he was given the teaching responsibility at al-Salïmiyya mosque in al-Sãlihiyyã (Ibn `Arabï’s complex), and soon after he commenced work on his own extensive commentary on al-Baydawi's popular commentary on the Qur'ãn. These demanding commitments may explain why work on the Wasã'il stopped rather abruptly.

This introductory study to the Wasã'il comprises three main sections. The first section offers necessary background information on the author and the socio-cultural and intellectual contexts in which he lived and wrote. This includes fresh biographical information about `Abd al-Ghanï's life and personality, introductory discussion of postal history and the culture of correspondence in the Islamic world, and critical analysis of `Abd al-Ghanï's practice of correspondence. It also includes a study of the intellectual milieu of `Abd al-Ghanï's time, focusing specifically on the theology of the Unity of Being (wahdat al-wujüd), as it was a core preoccupation that coloured most of `Abd al-Ghanï's works in the area of the divine sciences, including the Wasãhil. `Abd al-Ghanï lived in the shadow of the intense debate concerning the Unity of Being that raged between proponents of two influential thinkers who had a profound influence on the Damascenes: Ibn `Arabï (d. 1240 CE) and Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328 CE). This section offers a phenomenological interpretation of the Unity of Being and a critical analysis of Ibn Taymiyya's critique, in an attempt to clarify, with reference to `Abd al-Ghanï's insights, the main points of misunderstanding often associated with this controversial concept.

The second section provides a bilingual list with a brief description of all the letters, maps the regions from which `Abd al-Ghanï's correspondents wrote, and gives the number of letters each correspondent received and/or sent; while the third section presents thematic commentaries on, and selected translations of, the most important letters. More details are provided in the introduction to each section.

`Abd Al-Ghanï and the Culture of Correspondence `Abd al-Ghanï and Urban Sufism

The intellectual history of Islam in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is yet to be written. The period's main cultural features, intellectual trends, leading figures, and key texts have not been thoroughly mapped and studied. In the patchy picture we currently have, `Abd al-Ghanï al-Nãbulusï (1641–1731 CE) of Damascus stands out as both a leading thinker and a unique figure. His leadership is evident in the commanding presence of his large body of work, the significant contributions he made to many fields of study, and the wide circle of influence he cultivated. His uniqueness lies in the remarkable complexity of his personality, his self-made illustrious career outside, and even against, the political and religious establish ment, and his unsettling challenges to established social practices and prevailing public perceptions.

`Abd al-Ghanï was born on 17 March 1641 CE (4 Dhü al-Hijja 1050 x) in Damascus, where he grew up, lived all his life, and died. Both his private study and his tomb are still standing there, in the house he himself built in the suburb of al-Sãlihiyya at the foot of Mount Qãsiyün, which dominates the city from the North. `Abd al-Ghanï descended from a family of religious scholars that included many eminent teachers, scholars, and lawyers but no eminent Sufis. They were well respected in Damascus and admired for their scholarly con-tributions. The Nãbulusïs prided themselves on their ancestral lineage, which could be traced back to two eminent roots: the Jamã`a and Qudãma families. Through the Qudãma family, the Nãbulusïs can trace their genealogy back to the Prophet's companion and the second Caliph, `Umar b. al-Khattãb (d. 644 CE). Although the Jamã`a family originated from the Syrian town of Hamã, both the Qudãma and Jamã`a families had a long association with the city of Jerusalem, and were often referred to as al-maqãdisa, "the folks from Jerusalem." The family name al-Nãbulusï, "the one from Nãblus," however, identifies the family with the Palestinian city of Nãblus, a historic town of Roman origin located about sixty-three kilometres north of Jerusalem. This, newer appellation refers to a brief stay by `Abd al-Ghanï's ancestors in the city of Nãblus while they were en route to Damascus, a reference that eventually eclipsed the identity of the familial roots.

The family's great fortune and great reputation were established by `Abd al-Ghanï's great-grandfather Ismã`ïl, who was a distinguished Shãfi`ï scholar, a charismatic teacher, and a leader with considerable wealth and political clout. None of his ancestors had reached a similar status, al-Burini writes; nor was any of his descendants able to match his wealth and political influence. In this regard, Ismã`ïl was unique in the family. He was known to have owned a huge library, "the likes of which hardly any of his contemporaries was able to collect," and to have bought the family home at the `Anbarãniyyin market, adjacent to the southern gate of the Umayyad great mosque, where `Abd al-Ghani grew up and spent most of his adult life.' Ismã`il's son `Abd al-Ghani, our `Abd al-Ghani's grandfather, was an ordinary man of modest abilities. His lavish generosity earned him the reputation of being the one who squandered much of the family's wealth. BZ contrast, his son Ismã`il, our `Abd al-Ghani's father, turned out to be a brilliant scholar and was able to restore the family's repute and eminence. Following in his father's and grandfather's footsteps, Ismã`il started his career as a Shãfi`i scholar, but after a dispute with a Hanafi student over a legal issue he himself switched to the Hanafi school. He travelled to Egypt to study with the leading I Ianafi scholars of the time, and soon rose to fame and became known as "the best among his contemporaries in jurisprudence and the most conversant with its method." He authored many works, the largest of which is a twelvevolume commentary on Hanafi law, "al-Ihkãm Sharh Durar al-Hukkãm wa Ghurar al-Ahkãm." He died rather young at the age of forty-five, leaving behind a young family – his widow, three sons, and one daughter.

`Abd al-Ghani was only twelve when his father died. He was born in his mother's parents' home during his father's stay in Egypt. A gifted child, he learned the Qur'ãn by heart by the age of five, and his father used to distinguish him among his siblings, saying: "In him I see the signs of virtue clearly showing." His mother, Zaynab, also treated him with care and affection and he remembered her fondly. At a very young age `Abd al-Ghani was eager to attend his father's lessons as well as the lessons of the renowned hadïth scholar Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi (d. 1061 H/1651 CE), the author of the famous biographical dictionary of the time, The Orbiting Planets (Kawãkib). He attended al-Ghazzi's classes for several years and was included in the general licence (ijãza hãmma) al-Ghazzi granted to his class for attending his hadïth lessons. When `Abd al-Ghani was eleven, his revered hadïth teacher died and a short time later so did his father. Yet, he continued his formal education, which, according to his great-grandson and main biographer, Kamãl al-Din al-Ghazzi, involved the most eminent teachers of Damascus, such as Ahmad al-Qal`i (d. 1067 x/1656 cE), `Abd al-Bãqi al-Hanbali (d. 1071 x/1660 CE), Muhammad al-Mahãsini (d. 1072 H/1661 CE), Mahmüd al-Kurdi (d. 1074 H/1663 cE), Muhammad al-`Ïthãwi (d. 1080 x/1669 CE), and Ibn Hamza (d. 1085 H/1674 CE). To what extent the sixteen teachers (excluding his father and his hadith teacher) named by al-Ghazzi were influential in the making of `Abd al-Ghani is hard to tell, especially since several of them died when he was still young. One, `Ali al-Shibrãmilsi (d. 1087 H/1676 CE), he had not met; and one, Muhammad al-Ustuwãni (d. 1072 H/1661 CE), was an anti-Sufi fundamentalist. Of note too is the fact that al-Ghazzi's list of formal teachers includes no Sufi masters. As for the two Sufi masters, `Abd al-Razzãq al-Kilãni and Abü Sa`id al-Balkhi, who initiated `Abd al-Ghani into the Qãdiriyya and Naqshbandiyya orders respectively, al-Ghazzi lists them separately to show the inner spiritual knowledge `Abd al-Ghani had inherited from them without formal training, and to trace the origin of the spiritual knowledge both orders transmit through a chain of key masters back to the Prophet. In fact, of the sixteen teachers with whom `Abd al-Ghani is said to have studied after the death of his father and his hadith teacher, he himself mentions with respect only one, Ibn Hamza, naqib al-ashrãf, the Head of the Damascene "Nobles" (the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad). This raises questions about the purpose of al-Ghazzi's list: he seems to be interested more in establishing connections with celebrities than in detecting the truly influential figures in `Abd al-Ghani's life and thought.

From his early years, `Abd al-Ghani was inclined to prayer, seclusion, and spirituality, and his remarkable devotion to his religious duties attracted the attention of his father. The years of `Abd al-Ghani's youth following the death of his father remain almost blank. We know very little about this crucial formative period, especially with regard to his mystical training and the development of his spiritual sensibility. All we know is that by the age of twenty `Abd al-Ghani had mastered so many core texts of the exoteric sciences of the Arabic language, Islamic law, the prophetic traditions, Qur'ãn recitation, and religious obligatory practices, that he began to show keen interest in the esoteric sciences of Sufism, and that he had already read the works of eminent Sufi masters, such as Ibn al-Fãrid (d. 632 x/1235 CE), Ibn `Arabi (d. 637 x/1240 CE), al-Tilimsãni (d. 690 x/1291 CE), and al-Jili (d. 831 H/1428 CE). It is likely that this unknown yet important phase in the forming of `Abd al-Ghani's personality was devoted, alongside his formal education, to the extensive reading of Sufi literature. Although his father's large library was all but lost by the time `Abd al-Ghani took over the management of the family's affairs, we know that he himself had amassed a large collection of books.

`Abd al-Ghani inherited a reputation as a member of a highly respected family that had been anchored in Islamic law over several generations. His decision to break with a long family tradition and to choose instead the path of Sufism, at a time when anti-Sufi sentiment was high and Sufis were under strong attack from religious authorities, must have been a difficult one. Yet, he was passionate about spirituality from a tender age, and was even more passionate about the way it was developed, articulated, and taught by the most controversial Sufi of all, Muhyi al-Din Ibn al-`Arabi (abridged as Ibn `Arabi). He adopted Ibn `Arabi as his spiritual master and saw himself as a reviver and defender of his teachings. This embroiled him in the master's controversies, in the shadow of which he lived, taught, and wrote.

In choosing the path of spirituality, `Abd al-Ghani did not completely forsake his family's long interest in Islamic law, nor did he abandon his engagement with the world. Rather, he tried to bring spirituality and worldliness, the truth and the law (al-haqiqa and al-shariha), into a new harmony. This was not easy, of course, especially in the context of Damascus, where the religious establishment was hostile to his ideas. We do not know much about the origin or basis of this hostility, but we know that he struggled against the culture of religious intolerance that his eminent predecessor Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328 CE) had cultivated in the city. We also know that he struggled with the conflicting demands of his two-sided approach, which embraced the truth and the law, the divine and the human sides of being. One of his self-appointed tasks was to reconcile the ecumenism of the divine-oriented truth with the prejudice of the human-oriented law. This formed the basis of his philosophy of religion.

`Abd al-Ghanï's time, as he saw it, was marked by spiritual, moral, and intellectual decline. In his own mind, he was certain of what the society needed and what he could offer. He passionately advocated for religious tolerance and social justice, and fought relentlessly against the narrow-mindedness of religious authorities and the corruption of officials, both Arab and Turkish. He was keen to broaden the Islamic horizon of religious truth and to cultivate a sense of universal piety that, he believed, all peoples share. Following a self-determined approach to spiritual enlightenment, he was able to lay the foundation for a rather "modern" model of what might be called "urban Sufism." It is a personal, rather than an institutional, approach to spirituality that, on the one hand, focuses on the epistemological power of the text, while on the other, strives to accommodate the socio-cultural demands and growing complexity of urban life. True, `Abd al-Ghanï considered himself a Qãdirï by spiritual learning (mashraban) and a Naqshbandï by spiritual order (tariqatan), but, as his close disciple al-Baytamani clarifies, his affiliation with both orders was conferred as an honorary status "without seeking or service on his part" (bidün su`ãl minhü wa-lã khidma), that is, in recognition of his spiritual promise rather than being earned through rigorous institutional training. `Abd al-Ghanï might have been at odds with the religious establishment, but his approach seems to have won him the hearts and minds of the Damascenes, who deeply revered him as one of their most beloved saints. In Salk al-Durar, the renowned eighteenth-century biographer al-Murãdï introduced `Abd al-Ghanï as follows:

> The teacher of all teachers, the most intelligent of all, the saint who knows, the spring of all knowledge and modes of knowing, the single imãm, the magnanimous and unique, the learned and erudite, the understanding authority, the great sea, the illustrious cleric, shaykh al-Islam and most distinguished of the eminent imãms, the author of works that are celebrated in the East and the West, and are circulated among Arabs and non-Arabs, who is endowed with a pleasing character and brilliant attributes, the pole of all poles, the likes of whom the ages have not been able to reproduce, the one who knows his Lord and is prized with the Lord's love and proximity, who has manifested virtues and dazzling revelations.

`Abd al-Ghanï was the last eminent figure of the Nãbulusïs, after whom the family's commanding intellectual presence rapidly van ished, thanks largely to the modern reform movements that emerged at the beginning of the nineteenth century and led to the cutting of intellectual ties with the preceding masters. Although he is the author of more than 280 works in various fields, today `Abd al-Ghanï is only faintly present in the collective memory of modern Muslims. Only fifty-three of his works have been published and very little has been written about him. Most of his works have remained in manuscript form buried in libraries around the world.

House of Knowledge

The seventy-two letters that `Abd al-Ghanï included in the Wasã'il al-Tahqiq wa Rasã'il al-Tawfiq, presented here for the first time, are a valuable, yet hitherto unexamined, source on his personality, thoughts, and preoccupations, as well as on the socio-intellectual context in which he lived. The tone and content of the letters portray the image of a humble, pious, tolerant, yet authoritative teacher–scholar, one who devoted his life to God, spirituality, and the pursuit of truth, taking upon himself the onerous duty of guiding his fellow Muslims to the right path in matters of religion and morality. This self-assigned mission was predicated on a deep sense of despondency about the state of moral decline and corruption the Islamic community had reached, and also on a feeling of disappointment with the intolerance of, and lack of knowledge among, official jurists. The letters also reveal `Abd al-Ghanï's intellectual rigour, his uncompromising stance on core issues of belief, and his creative ability to accommodate emerging challenges and enable new understanding.

Venerable and admirable as it may be, this image reflects only one aspect of `Abd al-Ghanï's complex personality. Other, equally important aspects can be gleaned from other works, and especially from his own self-reflections on the ways in which he engaged with his colleagues, disciples, and members of the wider community, sharing their diverse preoccupations, experiences, and concerns on both the spiritual and the corporeal sides of life. Juxtaposing the contrasting aspects of his personality against one another gives us a deeper understanding of the true nature of his character.

In the introduction to his major anthology of poems (Diwãn al-Dawãwin), `Abd al-Ghanï offers some brief, yet profoundly illuminating, reflections on the inner texture of his thoughts. Both the Diwãn and the Wasã'il were compiled in the latter part of `Abd al-Ghanï's life, thus marking as it were the beginning of the concluding chapter of the master's prolific and eventful career. The poems themselves constitute an extensive record of his life experiences, revealing many facets of his concerns, pleasures, and aspirations, while his introductory notes are carefully worded to explain the apparent contrasts and contradictions they expose.

Divided into four distinct sections, each with a different title, "the anthology of anthologies," as `Abd al-Ghanï describes it, is designed to include the different kinds of poems he wrote throughout his life. Using an architectural metaphor, he likens his anthology to a "house" with four gates, a structure that in a sense reflects the architecture of his own self. For him, the "house" stands for the colourful make-up of humanity, the dwelling of his soul, the structure that embraces the inner spiritual reality he came to embody. Conceived in the image of a heavenly quadrangular structure common in medieval Islamic literature, the house marks the centre from which four rivers of knowledge flow in the likeness of the four rivers of Paradise. Each river flows from a gate of the house, representing a mode of knowledge and an access point to one section of the anthology. In fact, each section of this anthology forms a complete anthology on its own, and indeed two of these have been published separately.

The first gate, Diwãn al-Haqã'iq wa Majmü` al-Raqã'iq (The Anthology of Truths and the Sum of all Layers), `Abd al-Ghanï explains, is the access point to “divine ecstasies, lordly revelations, and sacred disclosures,” representing the heavenly river of wine. The second gate, “Nafhat al-Qabül fï Midhat al-Rasül” ("The Southerly Breeze in Praising the Prophet”), is the access point to high praise, representing the heavenly river of milk. The third gate, “Riyãd al-Madã'ih wa Hiyãd al-Manã'ih” (“The Gardens of Praise and the Pools of Gifts”), is the access point to literary correspondence and exchange, representing the heavenly river of fresh water. And the fourth gate, Khamrat Bãbel wa Ghinã' al-Balãbel (The Wine of Bãbel and the Singing of Nightingales), is the access point to worldly love and passion, representing the heavenly river of honey.26

This fourfold structure of the anthology is, on one level, a stylistic device to present a large body of diverse poems in a thematically coherent way, yet on another, it is an expression of the complex intertwining of contrasts in `Abd al-Ghanï’s personality. `Abd al-Ghanï was aware of these contrasts and saw them as natural expressions of the multitude of human engagements in the world, his self being as it were a mirror for this plurality. Different groups, for whom different gates are set up, have different interests in life, finding delight in different preoccupations. The house of knowledge is thus poetically designed to accommodate this diversity.

Through the first gate, `Abd al-Ghanï explains, “enters the knower into the paradise of spiritual knowledge;” through the second gate “enters the one travelling with worship on the pathway of devotion, command, and happiness;” through the third gate “enters the one who is like the worshiper but is not a traveller;” and through the fourth gate “enters the one preoccupied with the soul’s desires and passionate love that is attached to the perishable world.” While the gates offer different access points to different people, `Abd al-Ghanï stresses that they are all legitimate entrances to his house of knowledge. Not only did he embrace them all, but, more importantly, he also lived and experienced them all. There is no exclusion or rejection from this house, wherein individuals can find, in one way or another, an extension or layer that connects them to `Abd al-Ghanï's soul. He explains:

> In summary, each gate provides its folks with what preoccupies them, and speaks in their tongues words that express their situations. I am able to do this because I am in a [spiritual] station (maqam) that is inaccessible to them all, yet is coloured by all of their attributes. Thus, I extend into every disclosure what I have of it in myself, so that its folks are delighted with the abundant rain of its astounding cloud. When I opened these gates, I appeared in the state (hal) of each group and wore their clothes. No-one knows me in my [elevated] station except those of my folks who have entered my house: the house of my essence, the place of my pains and pleasures. I have opened its four gates and allowed the water of its springing rivers to run so that every group seeks its desires, "and, surely, each people know their preferences" (2: 60). No-one can enter this house and turn around the fourcornered Ka`ba, for which I have built it, except he for whom one of these gates is opened, he who belongs to those who believe in it, and who has purified himself with the water of courtesy. Otherwise, he would be like the one catching water with his hand, believing that his palm was scooping and his heart was comprehending: "Among those, some will listen to you, but when they leave you, they ask the people of knowledge: what did he say just now?" (47: 16). <>

ON THE WAY TO THE "(UN)KNOWN"?: THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE IN TRAVELOGUES (C. 1450-1900) edited by Doris Gruber and Arno Strohmeyer [Series: Studies on Modern Orient, De Gruyter, ISBN: 9783110697605] Open Access

This volume brings together twenty-two authors from various countries who analyze travelogues on the Ottoman Empire between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. The travelogues reflect the colorful diversity of the genre, presenting the experiences of individuals and groups from China to Great Britain. The spotlight falls on interdependencies of travel writing and historiography, geographic spaces, and specific practices such as pilgrimages, the hajj, and the harem. Other points of emphasis include the importance of nationalism, the place and time of printing, representations of fashion, and concepts of masculinity and femininity. By displaying close, comparative, and distant readings, the volume offers new insights into perceptions of "otherness", the circulation of knowledge, intermedial relations, gender roles, and digital analysis.

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On the Way to the "(Un)Known"? The Ottoman Empire in Modern Travelogues:

Origin of the volume

This collected volume brings together sixteen papers revised for print from the international conference "On the Way into the Unknown? Comparative Perspectives on the 'Orient' in (Early) Modern Travelogues," which took place from to 30 November 2019 at the Institute for Modern and Contemporary Historical Research (since2020: Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies, IHB) of the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna. The conference's organizer was the research project "Travelogues: Perceptions of the Other 1500– 1876 – A Computerized Analysis". The interdisciplinary and international project focused on German language travelogues in the collections of the Austrian National Library, covering the period from 1500 to 1876. In order to analyze perceptions of the "other" and the Orient in a large-scale text corpus, algorithms for the semi-automatized search for, and evaluation of, digitally available texts were created. The conference was co-organized by the research project "The Mediality of Diplomatic Communication: Habsburg Envoys in Constantinople in the Mid-17th Century". The project team analyzed the communication of Habsburg diplomats in Constantinople with the Imperial Court in Vienna in the years around 1650. The letters of the envoys and the travel reports written during diplomatic missions were the main subjects of investigation. The focus was on a virtually unknown travelogue written in 1650 and allegedly lost in the turmoil of World War II, that had been found again. In addition to papers given during the conference, the contributions by Maria E. Dorninger and Alexander Jost from the University of Salzburg have been included in the present volume.

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The present collected volume deliberately does not follow a single paradigm but is based on the observation that research is currently characterized bya great diversity of perspectives and methods as well as by an enormous dynamism: Unknown fields of research are being discovered and new methods and categories of analysis are being developed, while established perspectives continue to lead to progress. Therefore, the main goal is on the one hand to continue this research and, on the other, to take up new approaches from the fields of communication studies, gender studies, and digital humanities, thus providing an overall impetus for further research. Due to the internationality and interdisciplinarity of the topic, many different research landscapes and disciplines were included. Among the authors are historians, art historians, linguists, librarians, Ottomanists, and anthropologists. The travelogues they analyze reflect the broad spectrum of the sources and the great diversity of travelers and travel motifs. The overwhelming number of these travelogues were written by Europeans. Four contributions, however, broaden the perspective beyond Europe by dealing with travels either within the Ottoman Empire or ones that started in Persia or China. Travel ac counts written by women are treated in several contributions, and gender-historical analyses forma separate section.61

Based on these preliminary considerations, the volume is divided into five sections: first Close Readings, second Intertextuality and Intermediality, third Discourses, fourth Gendered Spaces, and fifth Distant Readings and Digital History. Since the topics and approaches overlap, multiple assignments would sometimes be possible. In these cases, the editors have assigned the contributions to the section with which they have the greatest affinity.

The first section, Close Readings, contains five contributions that commence their analyses with the textually accurate and detailed interpretation of a single or a small number of travelogues. GERALD MACLEAN and DONNA LANDRY's contribution on "Comparative Perspectives on the 'Orient' and Kurdistan in Early Modern Ottoman and British Travelogues" starts with Evliya Çelebi's (1611–c. 1687) Seyahatname(Book ofTravels) on Kurdistan, which he wrote in Cairo following the 1671hajj.Evliya's portrayal of the everyday life of the Kurds, their culture, and their social and economic living conditions is then compared with accounts by selected British travelers. Particular attention is paid to Henry Blount (1602– 1682), who published an account ofa journey to the Levant in 1634 in which he deliberately distanced himself from the dominant pejorative portrayals of the Kurds in the accounts of other travelers. Blount was an outsider and, like Evliya, occupies a special position within the genre. This essay demonstrates how fruitful comparative analyses of travelogues can be. Whereas Evliya portrayed the Kurds in a vivid and nuanced way, showing a high degree of tolerance and openness to multiculturalism and distancing himself from religious fanaticism, most British travelers took little interest in the Kurds and did not distinguish them from other ethnic groups living in the region. And if they did, they were portrayed as barbaric, uncivilized, and followers of obscure beliefs, an image that remained prevalent until the nineteenth century and from which even the outsider Blount could only break away with reservations.

BARBARA HAIDER-WILSON's contribution focuses on the Austrian diplomat and officer Anton Prokeschvon Osten (1795– 1876), who was highly regarded by his contemporaries for the quality of his travelogues. Of bourgeois origin, Prokesch von Osten had received a humanistic education, to which he owed an ex tensive knowledge of European languages as well as expertise in subjects such as philosophy, history, and classical literature. The analysis concentrates on the bookReise ins heilige Land (Journey to the Holy Land), published in 1831. The author investigates the region broadly from various perspectives, including constructions of"otherness," characteristic techniques of representation, imprints of theauthor's socialization, the prior knowledge available in Europe at the time, anda personal and apparently formative meeting of the diplomat with Johann Wolfgangvon Goethe (1749– 1832). The framework of the report is, as already indicated by the title,a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, which is why Prokeschvon Osten paid particular attentionto Jerusalem and biblical sights. The depiction of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher is of particular value. The character of thereport as a travelguide is clearly evident. An important feature is Prokeschvon Osten's openness to non-Christianreligions and his emotional affection for the Orient, which shows why he became a "go-between."

A different approach is taken by CHRISTINE KÄMPFER and STEFAN KNOST in their contribution on the distinguished Prussian botanist Carl Haussknecht (1838– 1903), who traveled through the Ottoman Empire in 1865 and to the Ottoman Empire and Persia between 1866 and 1869.The journeys took place at a time of accelerated change, when both empires were attempting to draw closer to the West and connect to the globalizing world economy. Haussknecht's travel diary, which comprises more than1,000 pages but remained unpublished, as well as other particularly revealing texts by the scholar are evaluated comparatively. Special attention is paid to his encounters with Oriental Christians, tribal societies, and state officials. Since Haussknecht did not speak the local languages and could only communicate with the population through interpreters, his accounts reveal experiences of foreignness of varying intensity. A sense of superiority and problems of understanding are evident, though he appreciated hospitality. The influence of his middle-class Protestant background is unmistakable. However, a comparison of his first and second journey shows a change in his perception of “otherness” and the extent to which ethnographic observations and interactions with local actors gained in importance.

ALEXANDER JOST examines the travelogue of the Muslim scholar Ma Dexin (1794–1874), who set out on the hajj from China in 1841. The journey began just as the First Opium War (1839– 1842) between Britain and the Chinese Empire under the Qing Dynasty was at its height. After completing the hajj, Ma Dexin traveled to Egypt and Anatolia. In 1845 he reached Istanbul. Only after more than seven years did he return home. The report, which was prepared with the utmost care, meticulously records the itinerary and travel times, and was published in Chinese in 1861 with the aim of facilitating the hajj for future pilgrims. For this reason, it contains information about possible travel routes at the end.

The largest space, however, is dedicated to Istanbul, whose sights the author describes in detail.

In the last article in this section, MICHAEL HARBSMEIER deals with the question of the significance of comparison in the analysis of travelogues. In terms of the historiography, he outlines three successive phases in the study of travelogues. Initially, researchers were primarily interested in the information contained in the reports about the countries and cultures visited. Then, from the 1980s onwards, under the influence of thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Edward W. Said, the perspectives of the travelers and their perceptions came into focus. Subsequently, travel narratives were viewed primarily as a source for uncovering global or transnational interconnections as well as circulations of knowledge. Harbsmeier suggests that the greatest advances in knowledge in recent years– with some exceptions such as the studies by Daniel Roche and Jürgen Osterhammel – primarily emerged from micro-historical analyses of individual reports or travelers. Digitization and translations, however, would now enable the analysis of a larger number of travelogues, possibly initiating a new phase of research. Harbsmeier sees particularly great potential in micro-historical analysis, which presupposes a meticulous examination of individual authors. Digitization, he concludes, could be helpful in placing them comparatively in a global context.

The second section, Intertextuality and Intermediality, deals with the dependencies of travelogues on each other and on other sources. It is introduced by the contribution of GABRIELE LESCHKE on representations of the tomb of Christ in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in the center of the Old City of Jerusalem in works by Otto Friedrichvon der Gröben (1656– 1728). Latera Prussian major general– better known for his key role in founding Brandenburg-Prussia's first colony in Ghana –, von der Gröben had traveled to Italy and Malta at the age of seventeen, from where he had taken part in an expedition against the Ottomans. He then undertook a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, about which he wrote a travelogue that appeared in print in 1694. Leschke compares four copperplate engravings depicting the tomb with its representations in other works and a tattoo of the nobleman. In the process, intermedial and intertextual relationships are analyzed, revealing how differently the Protestant used these representations for his self-representation.

VOLKER BAUER's contribution focuses on the "Renger Series,"a highly successful series of books comprising more than seventy works published by the German publishing house Renger (Halle/Saale and Braunschweig) at the beginning of the eighteenth century. They addressed the political conditions in states and regions both within and outside Europe, including Turkey, Persia, the Mughal Empire, Japan, Siam, and China. The analysis concentrates on the series' intertextual and epistemic references to travelogues, since the anonymously published works were textual adoptions and compilations. The chapter shows how the knowledge contained in the travelogues was incorporated into the representations and what transformations took place in the process. A comparison of the volumes reveals a broad spectrum of intertextual references, ranging from literal quotations and dense referencing in footnotes to general references and indirect adoption. Cross-connections can also be discerned in the frontispieces. A central function of the references to travelogues was to enhance the credibility of the representation, which was increased if one could refer to personal perceptions and experiences as a source of origin.

Pavel Levashov (c.1719– 1820) was a Russian diplomat in Constantinople when the Russo-Turkish War (1768– 1774) broke out and was consequently imprisoned in the Castle of the Seven Towers (Yedikule).He later published his experiences in the Ottoman Empire in several writings, which form the focus of STEFANIIA DEMCHUK's contribution. Little is known about Levashov, except that he initially served in the military and entered diplomatic service in 1752, which took him to Vienna and Regensburg, among other places. His mission to Constantinople began in1763, and after eight years, in 1771, he returned to Russia. He recorded his experiences in an anonymous essay (Letters from Tsargrad), a diary (The Russians' Captivity and Sufferings among the Turks), and a tract (Portrayal or Report on All Invasions of Tatars and Turks of Russia and their Abuses [...] Continuing Almost Ceaselessly for 800 Years), all of which were published, with a rather lengthy time lag, between 1789 and 1792. The analysis of these texts– there are no illustrations – shows that widespread stereotypes, such as the image of the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of Russia, are most evident in the preface to the diary. Here, Levashov constructed "otherness" with reference to social phenomena such as the rabble, but not in ethnic terms, and he also described the harem in detail. Demchuck pays special attention to the relationship of Levashov's writings to chronicles and travelogues of Western origin, from whose constructions of "otherness" his depictions, which are strongly based on personal experience, differ in several respects.

In the final contribution of the section, IRINI APOSTOLOU examines constructions of "otherness" in the accounts of French authors who traveled to the Orient, especially to the Ottoman Empire and Egypt, in the nineteenth century. The focus is on textiles, especially clothing. Texts and images are analyzed. The representations transferred knowledge about the Orient to Western Europe, influenced contemporary French painting, which enjoyed great popularity at the time, and are closely related to the discourse of Orientalism. These sources show that exotic clothing was considered a characteristic feature of the Orient, a view that was widespread not least because it had recurred in Western travelogues since the Renaissance. Apostolou also pays special attention to the bazaar as a center of trade in textiles, cross-dressing, and portraits in which travelers were depicted in Oriental dress. These depictions could express a sense of cultural superiority or, conversely, admiration for the Orient, but also served to form identity.

The starting point of MARIA E. DORNINGER's contribution, which introduces the third section on Discourses, showcases one of the most significant cultural practices that led to the writing of travel narratives: the pilgrimage, in this case the journey of Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land. The main motivations were the worship of God, penance, the salvation of souls, the fulfillment of a vow, and a mission on behalf of a living or deceased person. Almost always, these journeys led to Jerusalem. Dorninger concentrates on representative and particularly influential accounts from the turn of the Middle Ages to the modern period, which she analyzes in terms of the tension between "foreign– unknown – known." In doing so, she incorporates concepts of "mental maps" and "memory" as well as prior influences on the travelers from their society of origin, which often contradicted their concrete observations and experiences. Dorninger pays particular attention to comparison, which was a central technique for illustrating the relationship between home and host country, as she shows, for example, with descriptions of cities and animals. Overall, the accounts she examines illustrate how the "unknown" intermingled with "known" information and how authors integrated it into the established body of knowledge.

ANDERS INGRAM's contribution highlights discourses on Turkish history and the ars apodemica by English writers who traveled to the eastern Mediterranean in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Against the background of expanding diplomatic contacts and trade relations between England and the Ottoman Empire around 1580 and the end of the Anglo-Spanish War (1585– 1604), concluding with the Peace of London, the area received more attention from travelers who published their experiences in numerous accounts read with interest by a growing public. Drawing on the Cambridge School's concept of "language," Ingram's analysis focuses on the discursive nature of travelogues and their contextualization. He pays particular attention to connections with texts on the history of the Ottoman Empire, which attracted considerable interest in Europe due to the extensive conquests in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Ingram underlines, however, that not only historical discourses, but also the ars apodemica rooted in humanism influenced the content of travelogues.

In his contribution on the depiction of Crimea in the accounts of Western travelers, NIKITA KHRAPUNOV deals with a region about which little knowledge circulated in Europe fora long time. He targets the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when the peninsula was detached from the Ottoman Empire and came under Russian rule. The increasing attention paid to the region found expression in the fact that it even became a popular destination of Grand Tours. The cultural, religious, and ethnic plurality within a rich cultural heritage made Crimea seem particularly exotic and made it an attractive tourist destination. Against this background, some thirty accounts by travelers of Western origin emerged, which the author analyzes in his chapter. The travelogues made Crimea known far beyond its borders and spread both experiential knowledge and stereotypes, some of which have survived to the present day. A broad spectrum of topics is examined, ranging from geographical, climate and living conditions to diseases, religion, violence, history, and descriptions of sights such as Bakhchisarai, the former capital of the Crimean Khanate. Contextual imprints of representation are revealed. Pejorative images, for example, became less important with the change of rule. Instead, there was increased reference to the advantages of Western Russian influences, to which the peninsula owed its civilization. Overall, the reports paint a differentiated picture of European Orientalism.

The subsequent contribution by Güllü Yíldíz deals with travelogues from the second half of the nineteenth century. This period was a very dynamic one for the Ottoman Empire as well as for the Persian Empire, a dynamism triggered by the expansion of contacts with the West. As a result, a new form of travelogue emerged, called siyãatnãma in Turkish and safarnãma in Persian. The author examines three of these works, produced in the context of the hajj of Persian pilgrims, in terms of narratives and constructions of “otherness.” In doing so, she focuses on text passages that report on Istanbul and shows that all three travelers portray the city asa modern metropolis witha stronglyWesternized population. This is especially true of the women living in Istanbul. At the same time, however, the travel writers also refer to the Muslim identity of the metropolis, whose impressive mosques they bring to the fore. The analysis, however, also highlights more critical views of Western influences on the city that emerged among travelers from Persia towards the end of the nineteenth century.

The fourth section, Gendered Spaces, consists of three contributions that analyze travelogues in terms of gender. In her article, Betül Îpsirli Argít focuses on one of the topics most frequently dealt with in Western travelogues: the sultan's harem. Based on an analysis of around one hundred accounts by European travelers published between the fifteenth and early nineteenth centuries, she gives a broad overview and examines the emergence and dissemination of key narratives and how they changed over time. The accounts were always a mixture of fact, rumor, and often erotic fantasy, presented to readers against the backdrop of changing power-political and social conditions, as well as the changing image of the Turk in the course of the modern era. The author shows that in addition to patterns of representation that transcended time, such as the harem as a private space forbidden to men, there were different emphases and interpretations. In the seventeenth century, for example, supposed lesbian relationships between the harem women, as well as their intrigues and rivalries with one another, became a popular theme. In the eighteenth century, the greater number of female travel writers, who actually had access to the harem, led to more critical views of earlier, more fantastic depictions. At the same time, under the influence of the Enlightenment, the notion of Oriental despotism, of which the harem was considered a symbol, gained influence. Moreover, the representations became more differentiated. In conclusion, the author emphasizes the value of these representations for historical research, since Ottoman sources alone seem to provide an incomplete picture of the harem.

ANNA HUEMER analyzes constructions of Ottoman masculinities in travelogues by Habsburg diplomats who spent time in the Ottoman Empire. The diplomatic missions of imperial envoys to Constantinople were of extraordinary importance for the dissemination of knowledge about the Ottomans in Central Europe, as they represented the highest level of bilateral contact due to the delayed development of more intensive economic relations. At least in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a large part of the travel reports to the Ottoman Empire emerged from this context.

Their authors were the diplomats themselves, participants in their mission, or members of their entourage. Hu emer's article focuses on the travel accounts of the nobleman Hans Ludwig von Kuefstein (1582– 1656), who led a grand embassy to the Sublime Porte in the late 1620s, and Johann Georg Metzger (1623– 1698), who went to Constantinople as secretary of a mission in the mid-seventeenth century. Although the sociocultural background of the two authors were fundamentally different, both used highly differentiated gender categories to substantiate the supposed civilizational inferiority of the Ottomans and to delegitimize their claims to rule.

The subject of KONRAD PETROVSZKY's contribution is the portrayal of femininity in the writings of the Austrian diplomat and orientalist Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall (1774– 1856), including his unpublished memoirs, in which the experiences of his journeys to the Ottoman Empire in 1799– 1801 and 1802– 1807 were incorporated. Starting from a critique of the paradigm of Orientalism, which he criticizes for narrowing the angle of analysis, Petrovszky concentrates on female life worlds, to which Hammer-Purgstall paid special attention, but which research has largely neglected so far. The focus is on female symbols and metaphors, on the significance of female acquaintances for the scholar's knowledge of language, on women as objects of erotic desire, as well as on gender roles and social morality, an entanglement oftopics to which Hammer-Purgstall devoted more attention than was previously acknowledged. All in all, typical tropes of the discourse of Orientalism, such as the superiority of the West over Asia, Oriental despotism, and certain forms of sexual behavior, were to be found in these passages, but, as Petrovszky points out, this does not do justice to the actual significance of the category of gender in the scholar's writings, which was much larger and more multifaceted. Petrovszky concludes by pointing to the particularly great potential in studies of masculinities in Hammer-Purgstall's oeuvre as well as in travelogues in general.

The last section, Distant Readings and Digital History, explores the avenues offered by the digital humanities for research on travelogues. The starting point is the assumption that comparison across a larger sample of reports facilitates the identification of important features of the genre. A prerequisite for this is the use of computer-assisted methods. In their contribution, DENIZ T. KÍLÍNÇOGLU and JÖRG WETTLAUFER present an interdisciplinary research project dealing with the rise of nationalism and the transformation of identities in the Middle East during the nineteenth century. They use asa central source some 800 reports byWestern European and North Americanauthors who had travelled to the Ottoman Empire, written in English,French, and German.According to the two authors, travelogues written by eyewitnesses contain a great deal of information about everyday life in the Ottoman Empire, ethnic and religious conditions, and the thinking, emotions, and leading ideas of different social groups, making them an important source for research into growing nationalism. The methodology of digital humanities is meant to help create a larger text corpus, to distinguish fact from fiction, and to identify intertextual relations among the reports and cross-references to other sources. The authors use a mixed-method approach with a fusion of quantitative and qualitative forms of text analysis (text-mining, topic modeling, visualization of entities, hermeneutic inquiry). The aim of the project is to link the texts, illustrations, and the embedded metadata on a digital research platform and to make them available in open access.

The volume concludes with a contribution by its co-editor, DORIS GRUBER, in which she presents parts of the results of her work in the already mentioned digital humanities project “Travelogues: Perceptions of the Other 1500– 1876 – A Computerized Analysis.” Gruber focuses on the place and time of printing of travel accounts to the Ottoman and the Persian Empires. With the aim of highlighting characteristic features, the relevant data are compared across the project’s entire corpus. For the creation of the latter, the project team created machine-learning digital tools that expanded the possibilities of identifying travel reports beyond the search in metadata only and on to the comparison of full texts. Gruber shows how the number of accounts about the Orient relates to the whole corpus, and which factors acquired particular formative power in the process. The argumentation reveals the changing importance of printing locations and the influence of individual publishers and their publication strategies. <>

ALI. THE WELL-GUARDED SECRET: FIGURES OF THE FIRST MASTER IN SHI‘I SPIRITUALITY by Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, With contributions by Orkhan Mir-Kasimov & Mathieu Terrier. translated from French by Francisco José Luis & Anthony Gledhill [Series: Shii Islam: Texts and Studies, Brill, ISBN: 9789004522428]

‘Alī, son of Abī Ṭālib, Muhammad’s son-in-law and cousin, is the only Companion of the Prophet who has remained to this day the object of fervent devotion of hundreds of millions of followers in the lands of Islam, especially in the East. Based on a detailed analysis of several categories of sources, this book demonstrates that Shi‘ism is the religion of the Imam, of the Master of Wisdom, just like Christianity is that of Christ, and that ‘Alī is the first Master and Imam par excellence. Shi‘ism can therefore be defined, in its most specific religious aspects, as the absolute faith in ‘Alī: the divine Man, the most perfect manifestation of God’s attributes, simultaneously spiritual refuge, model and horizon.

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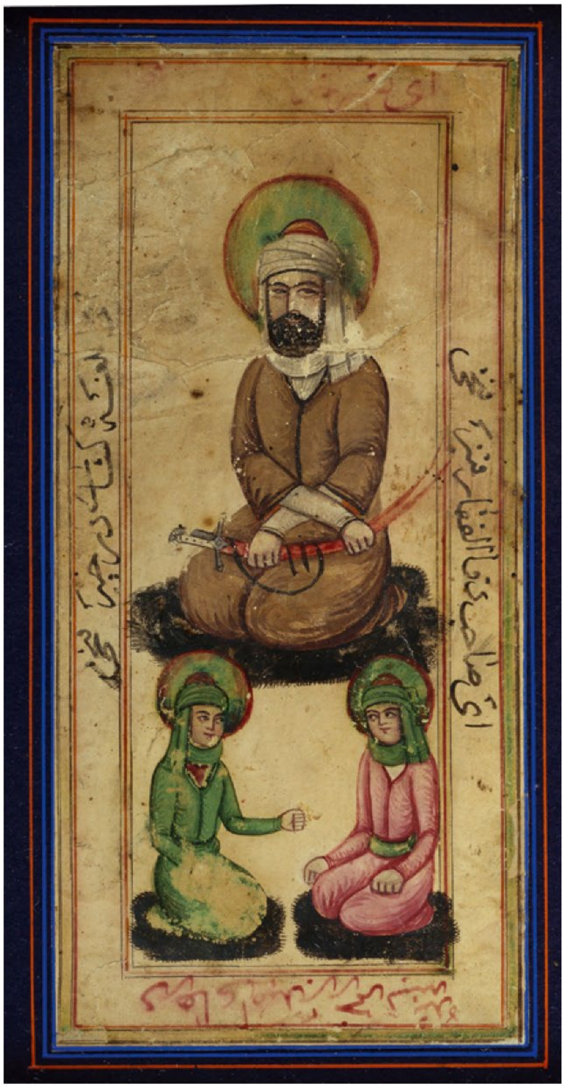
`Ali son of Abi Ta'lib

`Ali son of Abi Thah lib is without any doubt one of the most important personalities of nascent Islam. First cousin and son-in-law to Muhammad, the father of Muhammad's only male progeny and himself the fourth caliph, he is one of the most respected Companions of the Prophet in the eyes of all Muslims. It is however in Shi`i Islam, the religion of the mystical cult of the figure of the Guide (imãm), that `Ali is precisely the first Imam, father of all the others and the ideal man of God, that he acquires paramount importance, to the point that, for many, Shi`ism is the religion of devotion to `Ali and the other imams descended from him. As I have written elsewhere, Shi`ism is the religion of the imam just as Christianity is the religion of Christ, and `Ali is the imam par excellence.

In recent years hundreds of books and articles and even entire encyclopaedias about `Ali have appeared, written by Muslims and, of course, especially by Shi`is. Nevertheless, apart from these works, admittedly very useful, but written from a confessional point of view, there is no comprehensive study applying critical historical and philological methodologies to the subject. The only such studies in existence confine themselves to the examination of specific aspects of this major figure of the history of Islam. The present short work seeks to at least partly fill that gap and to serve as an introduction to a wider, maybe collective, study.

There are several distinct aspects to the figure of `Ali, to which we will return later in this book, but one in particular led me to write it. It is that `Ali is the only figure among the 'Companions of Muhammad' who has remained to this day the object of a veritable cult for hundreds of millions of the faithful. Apart from the more than 200 million Twelver, Ismaili or Zaydi Shi`is for whom `Ali is the supreme symbol of the highest sanctity, there are millions of Bektashis and Turkish Alevis, ('followers of `Ali'), Syrian Alawis (a term with the same meaning), and Kurdish Ahl-e haqq/Yahresahn, in addition to the millions of Sunni Sufis, notably in the Muslim East, for whom he represents, amongst other things, the source of their chains of mystical and initiatory transmission, as well as the figure of the perfect divine sage. For a large number of these Muslims, explicitly or occultly, `Ali is even superior to Muhammad. Why? Where does this veritable devotion towards this figure, who therefore constitutes a unique case of its kind, come from? Many other Companions of Muhammad occupy a central place in Muslim history or spirituality and yet none of them has, like `Ali, become the object of such persistent, widespread and fervent devotion. Even such a cardinal figure as `Umar b. al-Khahhahb, a father-in-law of Muhammad, the second caliph after him and celebrated as the artisan of the first Arab conquests and the foundation of the Muslim empire, never enjoyed such popularity. And why precisely `Ali? This book seeks to provide some elements of a reply to that question.



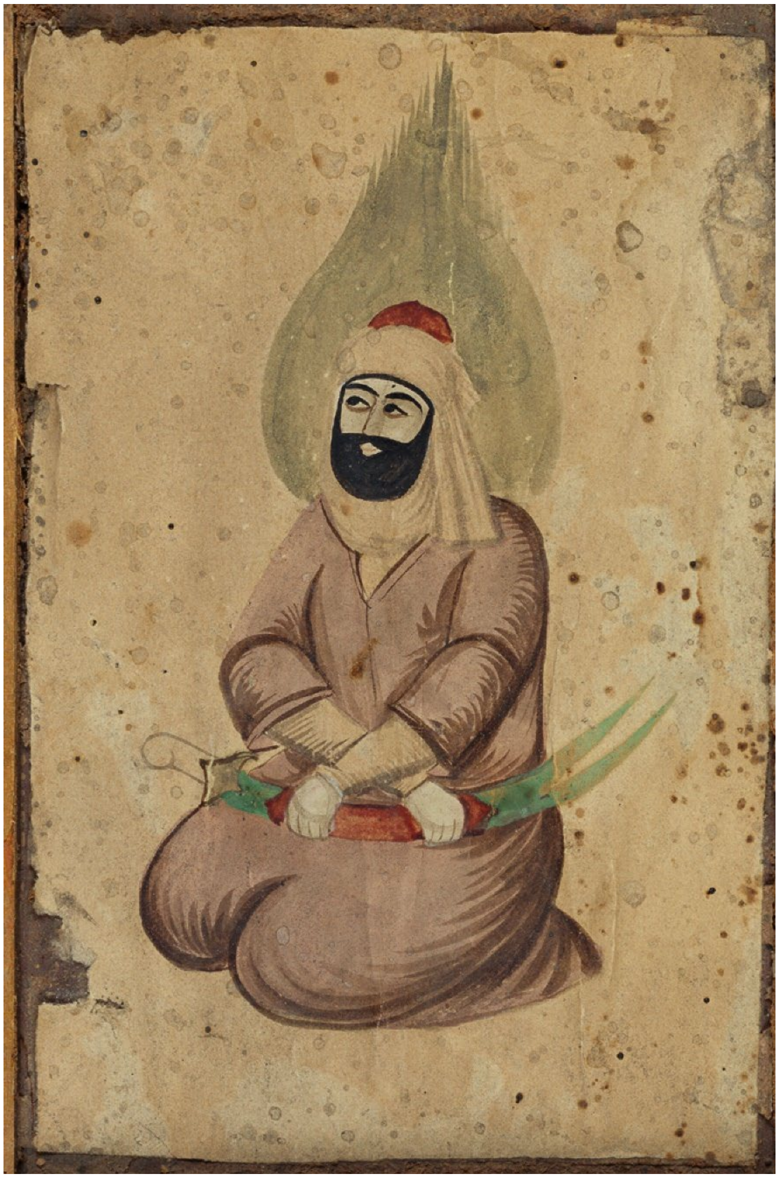
Beyond the centuries-old positions and polemics, in particular between Sunnis and Shi`is, the figure of `Ali b. Abih Thah lib is thus particularly significant in the history of Muslim spirituality. I am speaking of the "figure" of `Ali and not of the historical personality, about whom almost nothing certain is known beyond the broad outlines of some major events. I will return to these subsequently. In an article now more than twenty five years old, Jacqueline Chabbi stressed the impossibility of writing a historical biography of Muhammad, since the sources are late, contradictory, full of approximations and errors and theologically and politically biased, as they were written in times profoundly different from those of the Prophet and by diverging religious movements. Harald Motzki, however, who is rather less sceptical of the Islamic sources, pinpoints the dilemma of historians who wish to write a life of Muhammad: "On the one hand it is not possible to write a historical biography of the Prophet without being accused of using the sources uncritically, while on the other hand, when using the sources critically, it is simply not possible to write such a biography ”.

The personality of `Ali is no doubt just as problematic as Muhammad’s, if not more so. He is at the centre of gravity of three major historical issues as inseparable in their origins as in their subsequent consequences, which shaped the beginnings of Islam and have conditioned its destiny right up to the present: the problem of the succession of Muhammad; the recurrent conflicts and civil wars between Muslims over the centuries; and finally the writing of the scriptural sources of Islam, the Quran and the Hadith. The reserves made earlier over the sources which speak of Muhammad can be equally applied mutatis mutandis to those touching on `Ali, with this one difference, that in the conflicts around `Ali and his entourage (for example his wife Fahhima or his son al-husayn), the divide seems to have been even more violent.5 The life of the historical `Ali appears to be lost in a whirlwind of conflicts that shook those early times and profoundly marked the first writings of Islam.6 Be that as it may, it is nevertheless possible to write a history or histories of the differing representations of `Ali in the different Muslim circles. This book describes some aspects of the figure of `Ali in Shi`i, and notably Twelver, spirituality.

I will nevertheless first examine some “biographical” data on which the sources are more or less in agreement (which does not mean that they convey historical reality) by commenting on the enlightening syntheses that are mentioned above.

`Ali would seem to have been very young at the beginning of Muhammad’s prophetic career, although the chronology given in the sources is certainly not reliable. He grew up in the home of Muhammad, his first cousin, because of the bankruptcy and poverty of his own father. One of the very first followers of Muhammad, he would have joined him in Medina after the Hijra and married his daughter Fahhima. She bore two sons to `Ali, al-hasan and al-husayn, the sole male progeny of the Prophet and the two imams who succeeded `Ali, according to the majority of the partisans of the latter. One fact is so sufficiently rare as to be worthy of remark: while Fahhima was alive, `Ali took no other spouse.

`Ali was by the side of Muhammad in all his battles, often as the flag bearer or as the commander-in-chief. His bravery, his feats of arms and his warrior-like qualities became legendary. And yet, after the death of Muhammad, he does not seem to have taken part in any further war of conquest. He would seem to be unique among the great Companions in having steered completely clear of those events so crucial to world history, the Arab conquests and the first gestation of the empire. It is one of the peculiarities of `Ali which baffles the historians. Some elements which I examine below may perhaps provide avenues for further research.



After the death of Muhammad in the year 11/632 (according to the most accredited tradition), civil violence erupted around the question of his succession. `Ali, his wife Fahhima and their two sons were at the centre of the conflicts. Let us take a closer look. The fratricidal violence between the followers of Muhammad seemed to be predictable, given that the precarious balance sustaining that assembly of heterogeneous groups and interests who were the new converts, depended, it would appear, upon the person of Muhammad himself. He once gone, the Meccan Emigrants who had accompanied him on his Hijrah came into conflict with the Medinan Auxiliaries who had welcomed them. His quite recently and opportunistically converted former Qurayshi enemies, among them the influential Umayyad family, as well as his Companions Abü Bakr and `Umar, sought to impose themselves by neutralising by any means the ardour of the other competitors, and in particular the partisans of `Ali. The confrontations, although limited, for the time being at least, in both time and space, seem to have been very violent. Fahhima, daughter of Muhammad and wife of `Ali, is said to have died of injuries sustained in an attack against her house, led by the henchmen of `Umar. After a tense meeting hosted by the Banü Sah`ida clan of the Auxiliaries, the conflicts came down to a dispute between Abü Bakr and `Ali in which the former quickly prevailed, to become the first caliph.

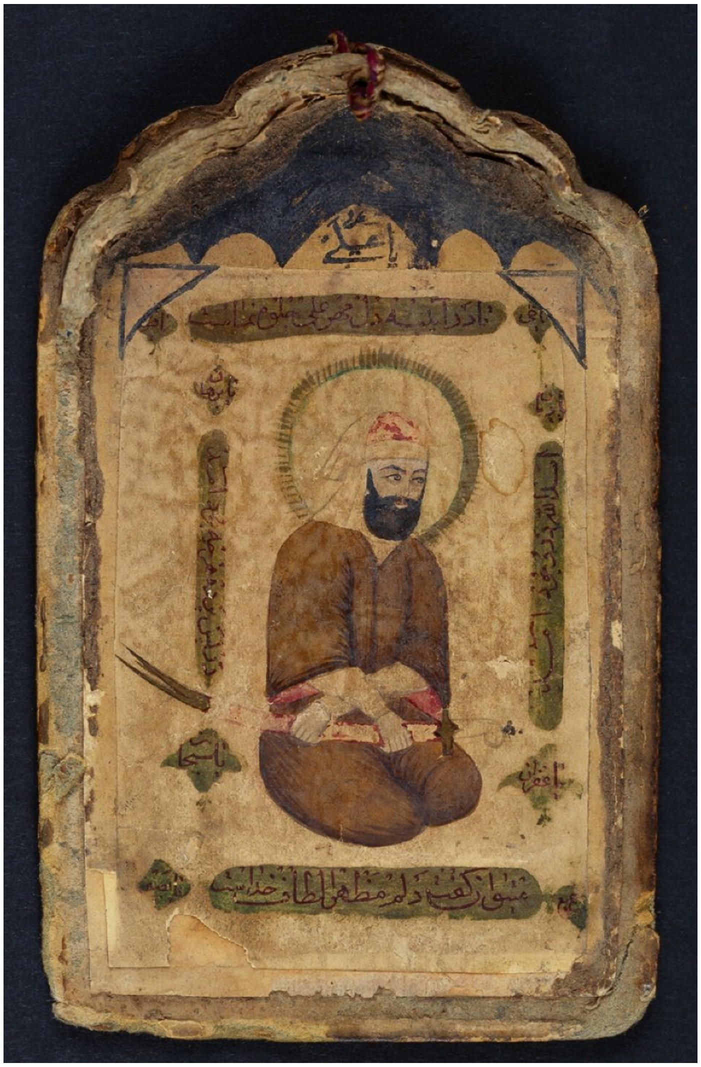
Of this episode, Islamic textual tradition has broadly speaking retained two radically different versions. The great majority of the religious sources derived from what eventually came be called Sunnism, the majority current of Islam who recognised the legitimacy of Abü Bakr, seem to have sought to attenuate or even conceal the violence of the confrontations and to present him as an almost consensual figure, in an attempt to limit the scope of the conflicts. Yet the historical and historiographical sources, even those of the Sunnis, contain enough elements affirming the contrary to have led a majority of modern researchers to seriously doubt the alleged consensus of the faithful regarding the election of Abü Bakr and the presumed unity of the Companions of the Prophet. According to most Sunni doctrinal works, the Prophet had not explicitly designated anyone to succeed him, either in his own declarations or via Quranic revelations (the “official” Quran that we know today contains no reference to that effect). His community would consequently have had recourse to those ancestral tribal practices that had always marked the succession of a charismatic leader among the Arabs: the designation, by a council of influential notables, of one of the closest companions of that leader, sufficiently aged to be considered wise and belonging to the same tribe as his predecessor or to a tribe allied with him. Abü Bakr fulfilled all those conditions and was thus elected, after the meeting with the Auxiliaries, with almost unanimous approval. The notable exception was `Ali, who finally also let himself be convinced of the wisdom of that choice, in his anxiety to safeguard the unity and peace of the community.

The partisans of `Ali, who was apparently very young at the time (which according to some constituted a handicap), known as Alids or proto-Shi`is, give an entirely different version of events. According to Shi`i sources, Muhammad had explicitly designated `Ali as his sole legitimate successor and this repeatedly so. Even more decisively, God himself, through his revelation had announced this succession. According to the Alids-Shi`is, it could not be otherwise: how could God and his Messenger have left the crucial question of the latter's succession unresolved? Is it conceivable that they would have been so indifferent to the leadership of the community of the faithful as to leave it in uncertainty and confusion? This would be contrary to the very spirit of the Quran, according to which the great prophets of the past have chosen their successors from among the elders of their closest family members, those privileged by the bonds of blood and initiated into the secrets of their religion. It is true that the Quran advises that a council be held in certain cases, but never when it comes to the succession of the prophets which must always be decided by divine election. The Alid-Shi`i sources, notably those of the first Hijra centuries, maintain that the original integral Quran, containing many explicit mentions of and clear allusions to, the members of Muhammad's family and notably designating `Ali as his successor, had been falsified, heavily censored and profoundly distorted by the adversaries of `Ali who usurped power after the Prophet's death. Likewise, this integral Quran, far more voluminous than the Quran as we now know it, explicitly cited the names of the adversaries of Muhammad and `Ali, who had belatedly and opportunely converted to Islam. To remove him from the succession to the Prophet, these enemies who in the end prevailed were forced to delete all those passages and to deny at the same time the authenticity of the prophetic statements concerning the election of his son-in-law.

`Ali was thus excluded from power during the reigns of the first three caliphs, Abü Bakr, `Umar and `Uthmahn. The latter was assassinated by other faithful, as were many figures of early Islam, after a rather chaotic reign and in what the sources call the first civil war between Muslims and in which some supporters of `Ali were also involved. `Ali, the fourth caliph, thus came to power in an atrocious climate of extreme fratricidal violence. His short five year reign (from 35/656 to 40/661) was marked by a series of major civil wars: the battle of the Camel, against a coalition led by `Ã'isha (widow of

Muhammad and daughter of Abü Bakr) and other Companions; the battle of hiffin against the Umayyads, led by Mu`ahwiya, a war that was ended by an arbitration; and the battle of Nahrawahn against the Kharijis, former partisans of `Ali, who became his worst enemies over their refusal to accept arbitration of hiffin. `Ali was finally be assassinated by one of them in 40/661.

It is very difficult to form a clear idea of the personality of the historical `Ali, as the sources concerning him are tendentious and contradictory, and with good reason; as Laura Veccia Vaglieri writes: "`Ali was at the centre of struggles that have lasted for centuries". We have, on the one hand, hagiographical and apologetic Shi`i writings that from the earliest times portray him as a legendary figure and as an exceptional being with superhuman qualities. On the other hand, after the Umayyad period, whose rare textual remnants give of `Ali, their hereditary enemy, a particularly negative image, the Abbassid sources downplay the Shi`i image of `Ali, in an attempt to recuperate him by making of him a Companion of the Prophet particularly worthy of respect, but otherwise similar to the others, without being in any way uniquely superior to them.



Nevertheless, many different sources are unanimous about some aspects of his character: his bravery (as we have seen), his eloquence both in prose and in poetry (a collection of poems of very uncertain authenticity is attributed to him), his excellent knowledge of the Quran and of the prophetic Sunna, not least in his insistence on the duty of putting them into practice, and finally, his ascetic and chivalrous spirit. These qualities are partly evident in the voluminous collection entitled Nahj al-balãgha that is attributed to him. It is a sort of anthology of letters, words of wisdom, advice, aphorisms, sermons, eschatological predictions and speeches of different kinds, whose attribution to `Ali has been under discussion ever since the Middle Ages. It is true that the book was compiled by the Shi`i savant al-Sharif al-Rahi (d. 406/1016), well after the time of `Ali and in the particular context of the Buyid government (I shall come back to this in due course). The Sunnis Ibn Khallikahn (d. 681/1283) or al-Dhahabi (d. 748/1348) consider that the compiler is also its author, whereas the Mu`tazili Ibn Abi l-hadid (d. 656/1258), one of the greatest commentators on this book, opts categorically for its authenticity. Again Laura Veccia Vaglieri, one of the foremost specialists on the subject, considers that an ancient core of the texts can reasonably be attributed to `Ali, given that, since after the end of the 1st century Hijra and up to the time of al-Sharihf al-Rahih, many famous authors belonging to all kinds of denominations quote a significant number of sermons and aphorisms of `Ali as proofs of his eloquence and of his superior spiritual and moral qualities. However the Italian scholar concedes that it is very difficult to distinguish what is authentic from what is apocryphal in the collection. In any event, both the overwhelming majority, both of cultivated Muslims of all times and of modern scholars are unanimous in attributing the compilation to al-Rahih and in considering the work as a masterpiece of Arabic prose and moral reflection. The commentaries on it, and its translations into different Islamic languages, can be counted by the hundreds. Al-`Ãmilih, in his monograph on this subject, mentions 210 titles up to 1983 alone. From that date to the present, one must add many hundreds more. As for the Shi`i faithful, they believe in the authenticity of the attribution of the Nahj al-balãgha to `Ali and thence consider this book to be sacred. However, for the historian of Shi`i thought primarily interested in the original esoteric tradition and its extensions – which I am – this source must be approached with prudence and above all parsimony. The reason for this is quite simply the affiliation of its compiler, al-Sharihf al-Rahih, to the staunchest theologico-juridical rationalist tradition of the Buyid period, well known for its opposition, if not outright hostility, to the original tradition mentioned above.

The Alids/Shi`is consider `Ali to be the sole legitimate successor of Muhammad, notably because his privileged relationship with God and with the Prophet. Well beyond its political significance, this succession has undeniably a profoundly religious aspect. For reasons that the following chapters will attempt to demonstrate, from very early on, perhaps even during his lifetime, `Ali seems to have been transmuted, in the eyes of his followers, from a historical actor into a heroic figure of quasi divine stature, at the very centre of what many ancient sources call the “religion of `Ali” (din `Ali). As a man inspired by God, depository of all kinds of knowledge, Proof of God (hujjat allãh), he soon acquires an eschatological dimension: arbitrator (qasim) on Judgement Day, intercessor with God (shafi`) or also cupbearer (sãqi) of the paradisiac pool of Kawthar in the Afterlife. For the entire Shi`i imamology and metaphysics, in the main currents such as Twelver Imamism (the main branch of Shi`ism) and Sevener Ismailism as well as in the so-called “extremist” (ghulãt) sects, `Ali became the theophanic figure par excellence, the manifestation of the Names of God or the incarnation of a celestial `Ali, supreme symbol of the divinity; and this still holds true today. It is no doubt for these reasons that `Ali's declaration of the divine alliance, his walãya, becomes from very early on the third element of the Shi`i profession of faith, after those of the divine unicity and of the prophetic mission of Muhammad.

One finds a great number of these terms describing the figure of `Ali in Sufism, obviously in Shi`i Sufism but also in Sunni Sufism, in the great Muslim philosophers, as well as in the important pan-Islamic "chivalric" movement of the guilds and in the companies of artisans known since the Middle Ages as futuwwa. To this movement `Ali' is the sayyid al-fitysn ("master of the companion-knights"); the cry of 'futuwwa' is said to have been uttered by the divine voice during the battle of Uhhud: ls fats ills `Ali ls sayfa ills dhü l-faqsr ("no knight but `Ali, no sword but Dhü l-faqahr"). Finally, emphasis must be placed on the central place of `Ali in what is known as "popular" Shi`ism, where he is an object of veritable devotion as the holy man par excellence, the master of all miracles, the hero of battles against miscreants and against all sorts of demons, the hero of many popular epics and the main character of a number of Shi`i religious plays known as ta`ziya. We shall of course be returning to many of these subjects in the following pages.

As I have already stated, the present book is neither a work on the historical figure of `Ali, nor even on all the aspects of his spiritual nature. These subjects are too vast and can only be studied adequately in a collective manner. In the following chapters only certain aspects of the significance of the first Imam in the spirituality of Shi`ism, and in particular of Twelver Imami Shi`ism, will be examined. The contents of these chapters have already been published as articles in scientific journals or in collective academic publications. Here they have been updated, augmented where appropriate and slightly modified and articulated so that they together form a coherent book.

The work is divided into three sections. The first, entitled "Singularities of `Ali" consists of three chapters. The first is a study of the connections that link `Ali to the Quran. In it are examined respectively his roles as author and as the subject of the exegesis of Revelation, then as the content and the ultimate object of it. This dual dimension stresses the double nature, human and divine, of `Ali. It is for that reason that the study ends with the hypothesis of the possible identification, by certain proto-Shi`is and their interpretation of a certain number of texts, of their first Imam with Christ. The second chapter can be summed up in a syllogism: Muhammad came primarily in order to announce the imminent end of world; he belonged to a biblical culture; he thus certainly announced the coming of the Messiah (if the conclusion of the syllogism is expressed in this form it is because the Quran, contrary to the Hadith, never speaks of the Messiah as the Saviour at the end of time). However, in the earlier traditions of the Hadith, this Messiah is Jesus and, in a certain number of Shi`i texts, `Ali is the new manifestation of Jesus and thus the eschatological Saviour. The third chapter focuses on an a priori unusual expression that appears in a significant number of ancient sources, namely "the religion of `Ali" (din `Ali). In what way is it distinct from the "religion of Muhammad", which will in the end be called "islam"? What are its characteristics? Why was this expression only applied to `Ali? The answer to this question implicitly reveals the special significance of the figure of the first Imam amongst the great personalities surrounding Muhammad.

The second section consists of four chapters and is entitled "Between the Divine and the Human". Its first chapter, the fourth chapter of the book, examines different aspects of Shi`i theology of the Imam, of which `Ali is the supreme symbol. The esoteric and mystical aspects of this theology are based on the figure of the Imam as the locus of manifestation of the Names and Attributes of God. In chapter 5 the fivefold constitution of the spirit of the Imam is analysed. This notion, inherited no doubt from many biblical traditions of late Antiquity, the last of them being Manicheism, stresses the presence of the "holy spirit" or of the "spirit of sanctity" (rüh al-quds) as the superior organ of the 'intellective limbs' of the divine man. It enables him to receive revelations from God, in other words to possess the spiritual abilities of a prophet in the biblical sense of the term. The following chapter examines some special characteristics of the reception of divine revelation by the Imam, in particular during that holy night par excellence of the Muslim calendar, the "Night of Power" or "the Night of the Decree" (laylat al-qadr), which gave its name to Surah 97 of the Quran. Chapter 7 shows how belief in the continuity of prophecy through the Imam becomes problematic with the establishment of the orthodox dogma of the "end of prophecy" after the death of Muhammad. The chapter thus studies the relation between two major notions of Shi`i religion, that of "keeping the secret" (taqiyya) and that of the "sealing of prophecy" (khatm al-nubuwwa). Islamic "orthodoxy", as just stated, interpreted this expression from the Quran 33:40 to mean "the end of prophecy", which in turn implied that nobody could receive the Divine Word after the death of Muhammad, and in effect making Islam the last religion. The Shi`is, just like some other believers in the first centuries of Islam, have not adhered to this dogma. For them, revelation could not end. It had continued thanks to the Imams, and more particularly to `Ali, but, since the sometimes violent imposition of Sunni orthodoxy, they had been compelled for reasons of prudence to dissimulate their continuing adherence to the doctrine.

The third and last section, "Spiritual Horizons", consists of two chapters. It examines the spreading of the cult of `Ali among his devotees, first towards the end of the Middle-Ages and at the dawn of modern times, then during the contemporary period. Chapter 8 is devoted to the birth of a veritable mystical religion of the figure of the first Imam, thanks to the work of a major thinker of late Imami mysticism, al-hahfih Rajab al-Bursih (d. after 813/1410-1411), and in particular through an analysis of what can be considered his Quranic exegesis. The last chapter of the book examines the spiritual role of the icon in modern and contemporary Shi`i Sufism. It shows how painted "portraits" of saints, in particular icons of `Ali, serve as a medium of contemplation and as means of interiorizing the figure of the Imam among even the illiterate communities of the faithful. For many centuries, `Ali has thus satisfied the most sublime spiritual aspirations of the hearts of believers, whether it be, in the scholarly tradition, through the intellectual and philosophical journey of the educated, or in so-called "popular" religion, where the Sufi brotherhoods are particularly present.

The book concludes with the contributions of two friends and colleagues whom I wholeheartedly wish to thank. The first, Orkhan Mir-Kasimov, researcher at the Institute of Ismaili Studies in London, examines, with pertinence and erudition, the figure of `Ali in mystical and messianic circles from the V/XIth to the X/XVIth centuries. The second, Mathieu Terrier, researcher at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, studies, thoroughly and with finesse, the presence of `Ali in Islamic philosophy, with particular focus on Shi`i philosophers.

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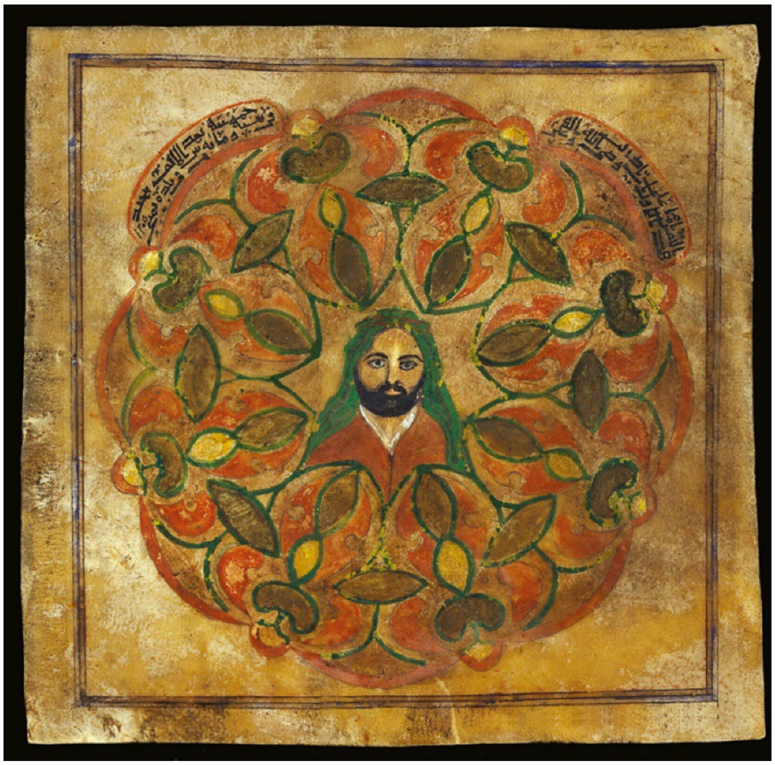
“People! I am the Christ; I who heal the blind and the lepers ... I am the Christ and he is I ... Jesus the son of Mary is part of me and I am part of him; he who is the greatest Word of God.”

“... I am the First; I am the Last. I am the Hidden; I am the Manifest. I am the One who gives; I am the One who takes. I am the resurrector of the dead ... I am the one who spoke through the mouth of Jesus ... I am the Saviour of this time. I am the Christ. I am the Second Christ. I am the Jesus of this time ... I am the Compassionate; I am the Merciful. I am the High One; I am the Most High One ...”



In proclamations like these, `Ali identified himself with Jesus as the ‘Second Christ’, a christological and eschatological reference to the Second Coming of Jesus as the Saviour at the End of Times. `Ali thus claims to be the Messiah, the Divine Man of biblical spirituality, possessing a double nature, human and divine, a man of flesh sharing the attributes of God. These sermons attributed to `Ali (discussed above in chapters 2 and 4) were recorded in innumerable Shi`i sources, the earliest of them dating back to the 3rd and 4th/9th and 10th centuries. However, they are very likely to be even earlier, possibly dating back to the times of `Ali himself, for what interest would the faithful have in forging these statements and putting them into the mouth of their first imam, claiming him to be the Divine Man par excellence and the Saviour of the End of Times, when the world had not ended and he had died assassinated long before and had tragically failed in his plans to govern? Such a forgery would have completely undermined the credibility of their first Master. For, as we have seen, after the assassination of `Ali (which, however, some of his followers had not believed, as they extended the Christian docetist doctrine to `Ali), and the apocalyptic threats contained in Muhammad's message have been driven away; after the civil wars, the simultaneous conquests and the founding of the empire, the Shi`is, although they contested large parts of the official history as rewritten by the caliphal power, moderated a certain number of their beliefs about `Ali. His messianic nature was stripped of its apocalyptic dimension, but the doctrine of his double nature as a mediator between the divine and the human was maintained, and these attributes would be passed on to the imams of his descendance. Thus, the divine Guide, Master of the walãya, the divine Alliance and Friendship, became the locus of manifestation of the Names and Attributes of God, the "Organ" of God; sent down to bring about His will on earth, the initiating sage and the living Word of God. It is thanks to the Imam, the divine Master, that God continues to communicate with humans, it is thanks to him that the heavens do not fall silent.

"We are the Eye of God", the imams endlessly repeat, "we are the Hand of God, we are the Face of God, we are His Side, His Heart, His Tongue, His Ear." The imams/walï in general and `Ali in particular are given such titles as "Proof of God", "Vicar of God", "Path of God", "Threshold of God" or expressions from the Quran: "the Supreme Sign" (al-ãya al-kubrã, Quran 79:20), "the August Symbol" (al-mathal al-a`lã, Quran 16:60), "the Strongest Handle" (al-`urwa al-wuthqã, Quran 2:256 or 31:22) (see above chapter 4). It is in this context that `Ali is said to have declared: "God has no Annunciation greater than I, no Sign greater than I."2 or "God has granted me the vision of His Kingdom; hence nothing is hidden from me of what came before me and of what will come after me." The purpose of Creation is that God's creatures may know Him. So the Imam, as the ultimate theophanic being and the "Supreme Symbol" of what can be known of God, is therefore the reason and purpose of creation. "He who knows us knows God and he who disregards us disregards God", "Without God, we would not be known and without us, God would not be known." The Guide, in his human function as the "speaking Quran", is the guardian and the transmitter of initiatory knowledge, of which the ultimate content is himself in his theophanic reality, his divine nature. At the same time, the theophanic Imam is interiorized by the faithful as a "guide-light" (imãm nürãnï, nürãniyyat al-imãm), ever present in their hearts who, thanks to their spiritual and ascetic exercises, can achieve their own vision and thus attain their personal Lord 'organically': "He who knows himself, knows his Lord."

These doctrines were recorded in the immense corpus of Hadith during what may be called the 'classical age' of Imami sources, in the 3rd/9th and 4th/10th centuries, and were later included in great compilations of Iranian authors from the Safavid and Qajar periods, between the 10th/16th and the 13th/19th centuries. Meanwhile, the divine figure of `Ali was never forgotten. It was passed on more or less discretely in the main currents of Shi`ism, such as Imamism or Ismailism, and openly in the sects (such as the Nusayris and the Druzes)5 said to be 'extre mist'. As Orkhan Mir-Kasimov clearly demonstrates in his text in the appendix of this book, the figure of `Ali was much elaborated upon in mystical and messianic circles, not necessarily Shi`i, which founded great empires both before and after the Mongol invasion. In them, the 'religion of `Ali (din hAli)' was reborn, notably in the Muslim Orient, in both learned and popular circles. The phenomenon, remarkable both for its geographical extent and its duration, is distinguished by some remarkable poetry, especially in Persian, that ideal vehicle of mystical spirituality, from the Ottoman Balkans to Moghul India, including Iran and Central Asia.

Here are some verses of Fahlallahh Astarahbahdih (796/1394), the founder of the influencial hurüfiyya movement:

> What the verse 'Say, He is God' describes, is `Ali / the King of Kings of the universe of knowledge, is `Ali.
> This universal Dot from which individual beings have come / By God that is `Ali, by God it is `Ali.

It can still be seen today it in the devotional songs of the minstrels of Central Asia:

> One night, I saw in a sweet dream the beauty of the cupbearer of (the heavenly source of) Kawthar / `Ali son of Abih Thah lib, the Prince of the Initiates, the Lion.
> He gave me a book containing the Names of God / I opened it and I saw the name of the King of Men (`Ali) at the beginning.

Or also:

> This magnificent King who, in the night of the celestial ascension / was at one with Ahh mad the mighty one (i.e. the prophet Muhammad), was `Ali. This is not infidelity, the infidelity is not that at all / For `Ali is as Being is; `Ali has been since Being has.

`Ali also occupies a central place in the iconography and the theology of the Bektashis and in the Sunni Sufi Qawwahlih songs of Pakistan. These always begin with a devotional song praising the divine nature of `Ali. There are many more examples. It is however true that very few people, even academics are aware of this. Shi`ism is a 'discrete religion' and `Ali is its well-guarded Secret. So apart from his place in the religion of the imams, `Ali is the central mystery of many other currents of spiritual Islam.

Why `Ali and not some other figure among the companions of the Prophet? For several decades, critical research on the origins of Islam and of the Quran, and the gradual integration of studies of early Shi`ism with it, have led to remarkable progress in our knowledge of these subjects. This progress will perhaps help us to discover new areas of research on the figure of `Ali. Conversely, the study of different aspects of the figure of `Ali in the early sources could help us better understand the origins of Islam, still enigmatic on many points.

These new studies have led to two decisive turning points in the last fifty years, first in the 1970s, with the works of Günter Lüling, in Erlangen in Germany, and of John Wansbrough, Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, in Oxford and Cambridge in England. Then, in the 2000s, new studies of the Quran, such as the very controversial one by Christoph Luxenberg in Germany, or the many publications of the French scholar Alfred-Louis de Prémare on the period that interests us, have been in several respects complemented by the contribution of 'material history', for example the archaeological researches and resultant publications of Christian Robin, and the epigraphical researches of Frédéric Imbert. These studies and other similar ones have consumed great quantities of ink and have attracted much, sometimes justified, criticism, including some by their own authors who, with great intellectual honesty, have recognized their shortfalls and approximations. But they have introduced, durably and perhaps definitively, new epistemological and methodological criteria into research on the origins of Islam and the Quran. These criteria are, broadly speaking, of two kinds: first, we have noted above that the Islamic sources on the origins of Islam and the

Quran, especially the proto-Sunni and Sunni ones, are absolutely not credible. They are full of contradictions, improbabilities, special pleading, historical untruths, and legends of all kinds and origins. The inclusion of studies on Shi`i sources about the civil wars between believers, the Arab conquests and the birth of the empire as well as the desire to obscure the apocalyptic dimension of Muhammad's message have been a major factor in this process. We shall return to this point. To further study these problems, it is also essential to integrate the study of non-Muslim sources, ideally contemporary with or shortly following the advent of Muhammad, that is to say, Jewish sources in Hebrew or Aramaic, Christian sources in Greek, Ethiopian, Armenian and above all Syriac, Zoroastrian Pahlavi sources and so on. This does not of course mean that Shi`i and non-Muslim sources tell us the historical truth, far from it. They are often just as biased as the proto-Sunni and Sunni literature. But they do provide new elements, new arguments, and new perspectives which are frequently very fruitful.

These new directions and their contributions, as rich as they are diverse, have, over the last twenty years, provoked a veritable explosion in the number of scientific studies on the beginnings of Islam. They have also instigated the creation of research teams in which specialists in Arabic and Islamic, but also in Christian, Jewish, and Manichean studies of the period, experts in Biblical and other regional languages in Late Antiquity, archaeologists, paleographers, codicologists, epigraphers and even historians of astronomy or of geology, all collaborate.

Among the very many results of this intellectual and academic ferment, two are of particular interest here. First, contrary to what Muslim literature claims, pre-Islamic Arabia was far from being a land of ignorance, paganism and barbarism. It was not an island lost in the middle of an ocean, but an immense region situated between the greatest centres of monotheistic civilization and religion, between Byzantium and the Yemen, between Iran and Abyssinia. For many centuries the Arabs, their merchants and their caravans, had travelled between these lands, transporting all kinds of merchandise and also people, books, ideas and beliefs. The Arabia of the cities, that of the sedentary tribes (not the Arabia of the Bedouins of the desert), and notably that of the cities of Mecca, Medina and Thahhif, in other words the Arabia of Muhammad, had been for centuries the home of the biblical monotheisms (Jewish, Christian, Judeo-

Christian, Manichean). Apart from decisive archeological and epigraphical discoveries, the proof is in the Quran itself, for biblical and parabiblical terminologies, adapted, it is true, to Arabian culture, can be found in their thousands, almost on every page there.

Another element, which the most recent philological and historical studies of the Quran confirm more and more consistently, is the importance, in the entourage of Muhammad, of Syriac-speaking forms of Christianity (but which ones from among the many currents of what is known as Oriental Christianity?) and/or what is vaguely designated by the term “Judeo-Christianity ” (broadly speaking the religion of those Jews who, whilst retaining their old beliefs and practices, accepted Jesus as the Christ). Contrary to the majority of specialists from the nineteenth and the most of the twentieth centuries who believed in the preponderant influence of Judaism on the Quran, the last few dozen years have been marked by increasingly precise studies proving the far greater weight of Syriac-speaking forms of Christianity (where, however, Jewish elements can also be important).

Taking into consideration the studies of the last few decades, and complementing them with information derived from the critical investigation of early Shihism, it is possible, as a working hypothesis and a possible direction of research, to propose the following overview of the advent of Muhammad and its religious and historical implications in the first Hijra century.

Around the 6th and 7th centuries AD, in the vast lands which stretch from Byzantium and Iran to the Yemen and Abyssinia, in a world rife with apocalyptic and messianic expectations, Muhammad came to announce the imminent end of the world, call on people to repent, to practice virtue and piety and to flee from the imminent wrath of God. His first followers were most probably known as the ‘faithful’ (muhminün), among whom would be Jews and Christians of whom no ‘conversion’ would ever be demanded. These were probably pious men and women dedicating themselves to spiritual and ascetic exercises and, above all, non-militant pacifists calling on their fellow men and women to love God and to practice mutual help and charity before the coming Judgement Day. A second group of followers who came to Muhammad later on and may be called ‘the emigrants’ (muhãjirün) (and ‘those who submit’, muslimün?), would have joined him for reasons of prudence after his military victories. ('the hypocrites' the Quran refers to?). They were militants, advocating the military preparation of the Earth for the eschaton, the conquest and the quest for war booty; for them, contrary to the first group, holy war in 'the Way of God' was superior to any other religious practice. The relationships between the two groups seem to have been far from brotherly and peaceful.

Can this division, which was decisively brought to light by Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann, be convincingly superimposed on the division we know between the Banü Hah shim, the immediate family of Muhammad (and of course `Ali), who were responsible for religious affairs before Islam on the one hand, and on the other hand the Banü `Abd Shams, whose family the Umayyads were responsible for economic affairs and the security of the tribe of Quraysh? The enduring conflicts and tensions between the two groups, well before and after Islam, are known by all.

Belonging to a biblical culture, and proclaiming the imminent end of times, Muhammad announced the advent of the Messiah, probably in the person of Jesus. Now, for a certain number of his followers, certainly among those of the first group around Muhammad, `Ali would have been a new manifestation of Jesus, a 'Second Christ' and Saviour of the end of the world. For them, the divine figure of `Ali as the Messiah would have been the centre of gravity of the Message of Muhammad, he himself being simply the announcer of the advent of their saintly hero. These hypotheses might provide an explanation for two remarkable characteristics of `Ali. First, his name which, as we have seen (see above chap. 2), is certainly a sobriquet, given that apparently no one in that period had the name, at least in the Quraysh tribe. This could also be the case of other 'names', that of Muhammad himself and also that of `Umar. But among those unique 'names', the name of `Ali is the only divine name. It means the Elevated, the Most High. And `Ali is the only person from Muhammad's circle to whose name the term 'religion' is attached: din hAli, the religion of those who saw in `Ali not only the most fervent follower and intimate friend of their prophet, but also the Saviour and Guide of the End Times announced by him.

As the years went by and the world did not end Muhammad seems to have abandoned the idea of the imminence of the Last Judgement and to have introduced some changes into his message. The evolution is in any case reflected in the Quran. He could very well have turned to reflecting on the affairs of his family, his followers and his succession, which ultimately could only go, it seems, to `Ali, the father of his only male descendants but also his most loyal friend and perhaps his Messiah. `Ali, known for his religious qualities, was an apparently uncontested candidate in the eyes of the first group of followers, but the prospect of his rise to power was a threat to the second, Umayyads. And with good reason. `Ali had had always displayed his bravery in often leading the armies of the Prophet so that his ideas would prevail. He is said to have greatly distinguished himself in the battle of Badr, where he killed a large number of Muhammad's adversaries belonging to the Quraysh, a tribal coalition of which the Umayyads were the most powerful element. They would never forget.

Muhammad died in mysterious circumstances. After the civil violence which marked the conflict over his succession, the influential men of Quraysh and their protégés, probably those of the second group, militants and conquerors, assumed the leadership of the Prophet's followers. In the reign of the first three caliphs, the civil wars intensified, while at the same time the conquests began. The southern and African regions of Byzantium and the whole of the Iranian Sassanian empire fell to the Arabs within a few decades. But this narrative omits a remarkable fact, the total absence of `Ali from the wars of conquest, uniquely among the famous 'companions' of Muhammad. Indeed, it seems that he did not consider these wars to be compatible with the letter and spirit of the first messages of Muhammad or of the beliefs of his first followers. These wars were waged by his lifelong adversaries, the 'hypocrites', the munãfiqün of the Quran. He would not take part in them. Meanwhile, he seems to have been mostly occupied in making a written version of the Quran. According to Shi`i sources, he was doing this in opposition to his treasonous enemies, who were preparing a falsified version of the Holy Book.

The short reign of `Ali was an uninterrupted series of bloody civil wars and ended with his assassination in the year 40/661. For his ultimately tragic caliphate, he mysteriously moved his capital several thousand kilometres, from Medina in Arabia to Küfa in Iraq.

Here is another ‘singularity’ of this personality which historians fail to explain. Could it have been due to the proximity of the largely Arab city of hih ra, one of the vibrant intellectual and spiritual centres of the former Sassanian empire? It was in this same city that a number of Christian groups (mostly non-trinitarian, anti-Nicean and anti-Chalcedonian) were still living. They had been driven from Byzantium because of their accusation of heresy and had sought refuge in the Sassanian Empire. There were also Gnostics with messianic tendencies such as Marcionites and Bardesanians, and also Manicheans communities who were active in the region until the 4th/10th century. Did this land, already marked by Late Antique esoteric and gnostic ideas, not appear more welcoming to the ‘new manifestation of the Messiah’ than the land of Hijaz, allied to Syria, a country committed since the death of Muhammad to the cause of the worst enemies of `Ali? Is this another example of those convergences between `Ali, pre-Islamic Iran and Iranian converts, which led the Greek historian Theophanes the Confessor (born 759 AD) to call him “`Ali the Persian” in his Chronography? Is it a coincidence that the day of Ghadihr Khumm, the 18 Dhü l-hhijja of the year 10 Hijra (according to the unanimously accepted date), when, according to the Shi`is, Muhammad declared `Ali to be his successor, corresponds (with a margin of error of a few days) to March 20th 632, the ancient Nowrüz, the Iranian New Year’s day? Ghadihr Khumm is one of the greatest Shi`i holidays, that is well-known. But what is less well known is that it is apparently the case of Nawrüz as well. There are indeed many traditions passed down from the imams which praise the Iranian New Year and describe it as a sacred cosmic event of the highest importance. The story of Shahrbahnü, a Sassanid princess and daughter-in-law of `Ali as she was the wife of al-Husayn, is consistent with the same convergences. Finally, it should be added that, according to some recent studies, Muhammad, a prophet but also a merchant, hence perfectly aware of international events in the region, including the ceaseless wars between Byzantium and Iran, (the title of surah 30 of the Quran is ‘The Byzantines’), indirectly supported the Sassanians against Byzantium.26 The fact seems to be confirmed by his attempts to attack Byzantine lands towards the end of his life. It is also true that Quranic Christology is in disagreement with the official Christology of the great “universal” Church of Constantinople and in agreement with currents precisely deemed to be “heretical” by Byzantium and present in Iranian lands, especially in hihra/Küfa as we have just seen.

After `Ali, power fell into the hands of the Umayyads. The civil wars, the ruling house’s ferocious repression of their opponents, notably the `Alids, and the expansion of the empire continued. `Ali was cursed in public places. His followers were considered to be the principal enemies of the state. Under the fifth Umayyad ruler, `Abd al-Malik b. Marwahn, towards the turn of the 1st and 2nd centuries Hijra, Arabic became the official administrative language of the Empire. Its religion was now officially called ‘islahm’. Some of its most important laws which were to govern the conquered lands and peoples were written. Its Book became the official version of the Quran (a compromised version by a caliph who sought to impose unity on his empire by violence?). The Messiah was to be neither Jesus nor `Ali, but a indeterminate descendant of Muhammad. The figure of Muhammad was glorified, probably in order to marginalise that of `Ali. A few decades later, the Abbassids took power in a bloody revolution in which the Umayyads were almost exterminated. But they continued the repressive anti-`Alid policies of their predecessors, reducing the status of `Ali to that of a Companion on a par with the others, attempting to radically minimise his claims to sanctity and thus recuperate his figure for themselves (see the Introduction). But `Ali was nevertheless omnipresent in the early history of Islam. In a sense he remains one of its focal points to this day, as the positions taken for or against him have decided both events and beliefs. We have seen that he has been and is still revered by hundreds of millions of Muslims, notably in the East, at least for the last seven centuries. His figure, still in many ways mysterious, is maybe a key to the understanding of Islam, from its origins to today. <>

IN PRAISE OF THE FEW. STUDIES IN SHIʿI THOUGHT AND HISTORY by Etan Kohlberg, edited by Amin Ehteshami [Series: Shii Islam: Texts and Studies, Brill, ISBN: 9789004406964]

In **PRAISE OF THE FEW: STUDIES IN SHIʿI THOUGHT AND HISTORY** is a selection of Etan Kohlberg’s research on Shiʿi Islam over a period of fifty years. It includes previously published articles, revised dissertation chapters, and a full bibliography of the author’s work. Divided into two parts, the collection begins with chapters from Kohlberg’s Oxford doctoral dissertation (1971) and related articles that investigate Sunni and Shiʿi views on the Prophet’s Companions and debates concerning the extent of their authority as sources of religious knowledge. Part Two traces the doctrinal and historical developments pertaining to various dimensions of Imāmī Shiʿi intellectual tradition such as theology, hadith, law, jurisprudence, and exegesis.

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The present volume is a selection of Etan Kohlberg’s writings, spanning the period from his doctoral dissertation completed at the University of Oxford in 1971 to an article published in 2013. For over fifty years, his work has been consistently marked by two distinctive features: scholarly rigor and unwavering attention to a neglected area of research; the chapters included in this volume attest to both. Professor Kohlberg's scholarship offers the fruits of historical contextualisation and sober analysis of an extensive body of Arabic sources. His research area chiefly concentrates on Imahmih Shi`ism. While Sunni Islam – partly due to its historical prevalence – has had more traction in western academia, the study of Shi`i Islam remains the domain of the few. This was particularly the case when the topic first attracted Kohlberg's interest in 1965. Although the state of research has improved over the past four decades, Shi`i scholarly traditions continue to remain understudied. An approach to the study of Islamic thought based exclusively on a single tradition deprives Islamic intellectual history of some of its dynamism. It also hinders the formation of a more comprehensive understanding of the questions and considerations of thinkers who, while working within their own tradition, developed their ideas in interaction with others. Professor Kohlberg's contributions have been instrumental in drawing attention to this neglect and enticing others to join him in the task of remedying it.

Writings collected in this volume are arranged in two parts. The eight chapters comprising Part 1 investigate different understandings of the term "Companion" (sahãbï), debates concerning the Companions' reliability as transmitters of the Prophet's teachings, and contrasting views among Sunni and Shi`i scholars as to whether or not a person's views should be designated a privileged status merely in virtue of being a Companion. Thus far, studies on the Companions in European languages have often focused on the historical narratives regarding the succession conflicts that followed the Prophet's passing; "Companion" as a conceptual category has yet to receive a comprehensive examination. These chapters, it is hoped, will contribute to broadening informed discussions on this topic. The chapters in Part 2 examine various issues pertaining to the Imami intellectual tradition such as the intertwined relationship between the historical and doctrinal developments (9–12); theological beliefs (13–19); hadith (20–22); law and jurisprudence (23–25). As Kohlberg's list of publications illustrates, his contribution to the study of Islam extends far beyond the chapters included in this volume. Besides various articles, critical editions, encyclopedia entries, and book reviews, his monograph on Ibn Tawus (1193–1266)—a distinguished scholar and bibliophile—is, in itself, an achievement sufficient to ensure Kohlberg's enduring significance as a historian of Shi`i written heritage.

As with any scholarly enquiry, the discovery of new sources and rereading of those already known might lead to the revision of previous theories and conclusions. This volume is intended both to contribute to the current state of scholarship as well as to offer starting points for students and scholars discovering the study of Shi`i Islam for the first time. It is hoped that the issues explored by Professor Kohlberg in this volume will be studied further in the years ahead.

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One of the prominent features of Sunni Islam is the central position held by the Companions of the Prophet, known collectively as the hahãba. These men and women have been revered for centuries as the first Muslims, who followed Muhammad and served his cause with devotion, and who became after his death the link through which his teachings were transmitted to later generations. Hence their significance is twofold: first, they are held up as the most excellent of all pious believers, whose actions, inspired by the living example of the Prophet, are to be admired and imitated. Second, their role as transmitters of Muhammad's sayings places them in a position of authority second only to that of the Prophet himself.

Whereas the basic facts about the Sunni attitude to the Companions are generally well-known, the same is not true of the attitude of the Imahmih Shi`is. Indeed, until fairly recently Shi`ism as a whole received less than its due share of attention. Interest among Western scholars focused mainly on the Sunnis, who comprise roughly ninety percent of the world's Muslim community. Shi`i material (except that which reached European libraries through the efforts of individual collectors) was for centuries located in areas lying outside the more accessible Islamic centres of learning (for instance, Imami Shi`i works were to be found predominantly in Iran, Zaydï works in Yemen, Isma`ïlï works in India and Yemen). This material consisted almost entirely of manuscripts and lithographs which for the most part were only produced in small numbers. For these reasons, most of the information about the various branches of Shi`ism had to be culled from non-Shi`i sources. These sources were often inaccurate, either because they were not directly based on original Shi`i texts, or else because they were written from a hostile point of view. This gave rise to numerous misconceptions about Shi`ism.

Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921), one of the few scholars of his age with an extensive knowledge of Shi`i sources and the author of many valuable studies on Shi`ism,1 corrected in his Vorlesungen three fallacies about the Shi`is which were current in his day. These were, first, that the Sunnis accept the Prophet's sunna as a source of religious belief and knowledge beside the Qur'an whereas the Shi`is confine themselves to the Qur'an and reject the sunna; second, that Shi`ism represents a modification of Islam by ideas of the Iranian peoples; third, that Shi`ism represents a reaction in favour of intellectual freedom. Yet at the same time, Goldziher helped to spread at least one fallacy by accepting the blanket claim of anti-Shi`i polemicists that the Imahmih attitude to the Companions is characterised by hatred and contempt. As will be shown in the following chapters, the Imami position is in fact more complex and variegated than Goldziher's statement would seem to indicate. In this as in other doctrinal matters, the views held by Imami scholars underwent significant changes during successive periods of Imami history. From a chronological point of view, one can speak in general of four major phases in the growth of early Imami doctrine:

1. The Umayyad period (41–132/661–750), which is characterised by a proliferation of Shi`i sects, many of which were to be called by later heresiographers ghulãt ("extremists"). It is also the period in which some elements are discernible of what were to become the Zaydï and Imami branches of Shi`ism. Though proto-Imami scholars of the time held similar views on a number of subjects, they had not yet formulated their beliefs in a well-developed and systematic form.

2. The middle and the latter half of the 2nd/8th century. This appears to be the first time in which a specifically Imami view on a number of central doctrinal matters is crystallised. The beginnings of an independent Imami school of law can also be traced back to this period.

3. The 3rd/9th century. For most of this period the Imami community was under the authority of a line of Imams. There appears to be no evidence that the views of

these Imams on basic doctrinal issues differed appreciably from those formulated in the previous century. The utterances attributed to the Imams appear mainly in collections of traditions, which constitute the bulk of Imami literature of that period.

4. The first half of the 4th/10th century and the Buwayhid period (334– 447/945–1055). This is arguably the most important stage in the early history of the Imamis. The benevolent rule of the Buwayhids gave the Imamis a golden opportunity to consolidate their doctrine and establish it along clear lines. The disappearance of the twelfth Imam (in 260/874) placed Imami scholars in a position of greater authority, allowing them to express their own independent views. It is not surprising, therefore, that an impressive number of works on historical, legal and doctrinal subjects was written during that time by such outstanding figures as al-Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 413/1022), al-Sharif al-Murtada (d. 436/1044), and Muhammad b. Hasaan al-Tusi (d. 460/1067).

There are additional factors contributing to the diversity of views found in Imami texts. Thus, texts addressed to the inner circle of believers might differ from texts intended for a larger Shi`i audience or for a primarily non-Shi`i readership. This was often the case where the need arose to conceal one's true beliefs (taqiyya). There were also occasional differences of opinion between various Shi`i centres. Popular Shi`ism constituted yet another significant element, often expressed in poems and anecdotes. Finally, from the 3rd/9th century onwards, the influence of Mu`tazila gave rise to a further diversification of views. The Imahmih attitude to the Companions, as indeed to any other subject, must be examined with all these factors in mind.

In order for this attitude to be placed in its proper perspective, the views of non-Imami Muslims must be taken into account. In the present study, therefore, Chapter 1 examines Sunni attitudes to the Companions, and this is followed in Chapter 2 by a discussion of Mu`tazili positions. Chapters 3–6 deal with various aspects of the Imam! views on the Companions. These views should be seen in connection with the doctrine of the imamate. Two elements of this doctrine are particularly relevant: the belief that `Ali b. Abi Talib was the only rightful successor to the Prophet, and the belief that the Imams alone, being infallible and omniscient, possess authority over the believers. In discussing the Companions, Imami scholars were thus faced with two major questions:

how to judge the Companions as Muslims, i.e., how to present and interpret their behaviour towards `Alih, given that for the Shi`is, loyalty to `Ali is the touchstone of true faith; and how to relate the authority vested in the Imams to the authority which the Companions enjoyed in Sunni Islam. The first of these questions is discussed in Chapters 3–5; the second, that of authority, is dealt with in Chapter 6.

The Zayd!s were also confronted with these issues, and the solutions which they devised are discussed in Chapter 7. The term "Rafia", finally, seen by some as referring to the Imami rejection of the two foremost Companions, Abuh Bakr and `Umar, is the subject of the concluding chapter of Part 1. <>

REASON, ESOTERICISM, AND AUTHORITY IN SHIʿI ISLAM

edited by Rodrigo Adem and Edmund Hayes [Series: Shii Islam: Texts and Studies, Brill, ISBN: 9789004464391]

This volume advances the critical study of exegetical, doctrinal, and political authority in Shiʿi Islam. Naive dichotomies of "reason" and "esotericism" in Islamic Studies have often marginalized Shiʿi thought or impeded its understanding. The studies presented here aim to foster more exacting frameworks for interpreting the diverse modes of rationality and esotericism in Twelver and Ismaili Shiʿism and the socio-epistemic values they represent within Muslim discourse.

The volume's contributions highlight the cross-sectarian genealogy of early Shiʿi esotericism; the rationale behind Fatimid Ismaili Quranic taʿwīl hermeneutics; the socio-political context of religious authority in nascent Twelver Shiʿism; authorial agency wielded by Imami hadith compilers; the position of esoteric Shiʿi traditions in Timurid-era Ḥilla; and Shiʿi-Sufi relations with Uṣūlī jurists in modern Iran.

Contributors: Rodrigo Adem, Alessandro Cancian, Edmund Hayes, Sajjad Rizvi, Tahera Qutbuddin, Paul Walker, George Warner

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On the Use and Abuse of Reason and Esotericism in Islamic Studies by Rodrigo Adem and Edmund Hayes

This volume brings together contributions on the relationship between reason, esotericism, and authority in Shi`i Islam from its earliest recorded expressions up to the 20th century CE. Although the interrelationship of these three elements has not been neglected in Islamic studies,[1] all too often, scholarship has been impeded by the casting of rationalism and esotericism as diametrically incongruent. Far from arguing consequently for the deletion of "reason" and "esotericism" from the lexicon of Islamic studies altogether, in this introduction we aim to reflect critically on how these terms have been employed, thereby highlighting how key trends in Shi`i thought still have more to teach us about the sociohistorical conditions which have guided them.

A critical locus for the intersection of reason and esotericism is the construction of authority, whether this authority refers to the socially-situated gatekeepers of an interpretive tradition, or a metaphysical guarantor of legitimate knowledge. The actual negotiation of such socio-epistemic norms takes place in living contexts. Within these living contexts, religious traditions which are typically studied apart interpermeate and coincide. This holds for the study of Shi`ism and beyond. Within Shi`i studies itself, much energy has been devoted to the specifically political framework of authority underlying the Imamate, a paradigm which separates Shi`ism from Sunnism and Shi`i sects from one another, yet more work remains to be done on the various socio-epistemic precommitments underlying Shi`i religious normativity more broadly speaking.

While a certain intellectual orientation may manifest as more dominant for a given Shi`i group at a particular time, it is our contention that it is a mistake to quarantine discussions of a particular idea or doctrine to a particular sect. Part of the viability of Shi`ism as a term for groups of co-religionists is that conversations on basic principles are shared, contested, and influence one other, just as what it means to be Muslim involves a broader contestation of terms and concepts over time and in multiple contexts. In this volume, we focus primarily on Ismaili and Twelver Imami Shi`i thought, but the contributions of these groups must be understood as discursive acts within a larger ecosystem of truth claims, social configurations, and political mobilizations.

The "Esoteric" in Islamic Studies

For many scholars of Islam, the "esoteric" in Islam is limited to associations with the Arabic word bãtin, with its counterpart Tãhir standing in for the "exoteric". The terms bãtin (literally "inward" or "concealed") and Tãhir ("apparent", "manifest") are a well-known hermeneutical binary underlying not only the interpretation of texts, but also the interpretable signs and events manifest in the world. In this framework, the bãhin refers to that interpretation which is not clearly evident, not accessible through common sense or the mundane operation of reason.

Yet the terms bãtin and Tãhir fail to convey the full array of social and intellectual phenomena denoted by "esotericism" in the history of ideas. Within Islamic studies proper, "esotericism" has often been arbitrarily applied, in a catch-all manner irresponsibly reductive of real difference and detail between schools of Islamic thought. Islamic thought's emic hermeneutical distinction between bãhin and hãhir translates only tenuously with any outside etic analytical value presupposed by the terms "esoteric" and "exoteric." In the academic study of Qürhãnic exegesis in particular, this hermeneutic dichotomy has been used inconsistently, allowing the "esoteric" to figure as a negative concept of what is not "exoteric," while the meaning of "exoteric" itself remains similarly ill-defined. Using such imprecise tools, scholars group "mystical," "Sufi," and Shi`i hermeneutical practice into a catch-all category of esotericism to set them apart from presumed interpretive norms, and reinforce these perceived norms despite the fact that these boundaries are not fixed in actual practice and human life.

The habit of placing at odds the "esoteric" and the "rationalist" aspects of Shi`i thought is evident in the divergent research patterns concerning the original core of Imami Shi`ism in the authoritative studies of H. Modarressi and M.A. Amir-Moezzi. On his part, Modarressi has achieved much to historically document the rationalistic and legalistic strand within Imami Shi`ism in its earliest manifestations. In his works, which presuppose the normativity of a proto-Uhülï Shi`ism, he portrays such Shi`is as having been threatened by a type of infiltration by esotericists, whose doctrines they falsely attributed to the Imams in narrations which can now be found throughout the extant classical Imami hadith corpus. By contrast, Amir-Moezzi has argued that the true religion of the Imams was of the gnostic, esoteric tendency, but that this was a secret closely guarded from the uninitiated. In his review of Modarressi's Crisis and Consolidation, Amir-Moezzi observed:

> Why should the thousands of non-rationalist traditions reported by prestigious early compilers be "extremist" forgeries, mixed into the sayings of the Imams, and why should only the theological and juridical statements with a moderate and inoffensive content be historically authentic?

Amir-Moezzi's critique is well taken, but a similar criticism could be made of his own treatment of the legal and theological "rationalism" emphasized by Modarressi. Amir-Moezzi quarantines the juridical material in much the same way that Modarressi has excluded the esoteric material. Amir-Moezzi, has not, any more than Modarressi, proposed a clear framework to explain the incorporation of both aspects of early Shi`ism into a common model.

In order that Shi`i studies should achieve a fuller maturity, we must ensure that our categories of analysis are able to encompass the multiple value systems operative under the rubrics of rationality and esotericism, coexisting and interacting within the various Shi`i traditions. Among traditions we must think about social and intellectual interpermeability, reaching beyond the reified categories and traditionalist labels which otherwise mold our understanding.

Conceptualizing Shi'i Esotericism beyond Islamic Particularism

In order to recover meanings "lost in translation", in the case of Islamicists' hapless equation of the "esoteric" with the bãhin, we should be cognizant of the fact that "the esoteric" taps into broader analytical frameworks and active conversations among intellectual historians and scholars of religion. The academic study of Shi`i esotericism must therefore take stock of its own genealogy, as well as participate in the developing study of esotericisms in the plural within religious studies and intellectual history, and at times in conversation with the social sciences.

In Islamic Studies, the cradle of the European academic study of Shi`i esotericism is undoubtedly to be found in the pioneering work of Louis Massignon. Massignon's life's work, however, simultaneously holds a special place for treating Islamic thought as intelligible within a broader universe of types operative within the History of Religions, connecting Islamic ideas and practices with cognate forms in Judaism, Christianity and beyond. Massignon's scholarship in this domain typifies Shi`ism as a minority report of comparativist Abrahamic theology, inclusive of arcane and transformative spiritual initiatic methods and juxtaposed with the "exoteric" hermeneutic practices of Abrahamic traditions' more "orthodox" formulations. Massignon found a meaningful interlocutor in Henri Corbin, and the interpretive legacy of both has set the stage for the continued work of Amir-Moezzi and others. Despite the at times extremely profound heuristic utility found in this approach, it has had the tendency to parochialize the discussion of Islamic esotericism to a very particular pattern of mythical exegesis, and is informed considerably by the logic of the Tãhir/ bãtin hermeneutic dichotomy to define esotericism.

Beyond the strict limits of Islamic studies, however, the contested relationship between human rationality and esotericism has been observed by intellectual historians to be one of the great legacies of the human past in the present. The supposed conflicts or harmonies of these two phenomena testify to varied attempts to create a holistic account of the historical development of religious identity, scientific knowledge, and political theory in the modern world. The observable disconnect between studies of "Western" and "Islamic" esotericism pointed to here ought to give us cause for reflection: Such a gap is not only the natural outcome of disciplinary boundaries and institutional limitations but also stems from profounder questions concerning the viability of esotericism as an analytical category capable of spanning disparate cultural contexts.

It has been argued that "esotericism" is intrinsically wed to specifically Christian or early modern European narratives of identity and is thus bereft of a coherent definition outside of that cultural context. Islamic “esotericism” might thus be neglected in a broader interdisciplinary framework precisely because of the supposed incommensurability of Western “esotericism” with traditions that do not share its own cultural specificities.

In response to this view, the analytic viability of “esotericism” as a broader human phenomenon across cultures, and expressly inclusive of Islamic and Jewish varieties, has been advocated from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge. That is to say that beyond the specific doctrines characteristic of a certain cultural sphere, “esotericism” finds concrete social expressions in the practice of “secrecy” with respect to the creation and dissemination of “higher” or more “perfect” knowledge within society. From this perspective, “esotericism” can concretely and non-polemically denote strategies for the construction of social hierarchies whose authority is epistemologically implicated.

Of course, the claim to uniquely authoritative knowledge (‘ilm) was long ago identified by Marshall Hodgson as one of the primary factors for the formation of a distinctive Imami Shi`i identity. A mature integration of the concept of the esoteric for the study of Shi`ism would include thinking comparatively about how elite knowledges are constructed with respect to their conceptual frameworks and social conditions, and would thereby bring us beyond hermeneutic dualisms or Abrahamic primordialisms.

If we acknowledge that viable usage of the term “esoteric” for Islamic studies requires the proper integration of intellectual history within its social context, this still does not solve our problem, as the influence of a certain “politicized” interpretation of esotericism has left its mark on Shi`i studies as well. The quintessentially “political” understanding of esotericism characterizes it as a distinctive mode of politico-ideological cultural production intrinsically conditioned in response to social persecution. In this tenor, the influential approach of Leo Strauss to Islamic and Jewish medieval esotericism is paradigmatic. Along these lines, the idea of a distinctly Shi`i mode of religious expression as the product of repressive violence has recently been emphasized by Amir-Moezzi to explain a uniquely Shi`i worldview and form of religious expression. For such politicized readings, the esoteric is “driven by political expedience in an environment where exegetical allegory, typology, and metaphor at large were vehicles for expressing dissent or elaborating "heterodox" ideas and concepts." This persecution-based etiology of the esoteric impulse, it may be observed, presupposes an explicit ideologization of authority by hostile "exoteric" outsiders, to which the "esoterics" respond. Esotericism is a dissimulative reaction to that ideology of authority, encoding forms of antithetical ideological production in the language of the entrenched discourse of political "orthodoxy." This presupposes a consistent external structural power defining the rules of intellectual expression: Esotericism's telos is clearly only to be sought as a subversion of what is implied by that power structure, producing messages in a language which, when "properly" understood, imply that structure's overthrow.

This unmitigated conflation of intellectual and politico-ideological domains inhibits the ability of the field to ask such difficult questions as: Must esotericism necessarily find intelligibility primarily as a product of revolt against other historically more self-evident and rationally necessary systems – for example, governance and the rule of law, public ethical norms, and discursive sciences? Or, rather, should one allow "esoteric" discourses to be understood as more autonomous in that they respond to distinct internal stimuli? The answers to these questions are only possible when Islamic studies moves beyond the limits of these hermeneutic dualisms into the proper study of how the intellectual and social domains of human activity interact.

Modes of Rationality

In looking for frameworks for integrating a socio-political perspective with a nuanced reading of intellectual discourses, we are forced to acknowledge the way "reason" and "rationality" have been discussed in sociology. Rationality and rationalism, terms which we must cautiously admit have a definite analytical utility, also face the danger of activating the toxic baggage of whiggish Western triumphalism in the face of an East flavored by irrationalities of which esotericism is one form. The deterministic reading of Weber's explanation for Western industrial capitalism as driven by a certain kind of rationality has been dismissed by many scholars in Islamic history and beyond. Yet historians of Islam continue to deploy Weberian concepts (charisma, authority, and so on) precisely because he provided a vocabulary for scrutinizing the relationship between subjective values and objective social realities without collapsing the two. In spite of certain receptions of Weber as a social determinist, his discourse on rationality provides tools for escaping a reductionist readings of rationalism as it is embedded in society.

Rationality is not an unchanging essence that is either present or absent in a discourse or a society. Instead “rationality” is a relative phenomenon, being distinguishable primarily in the goals it seeks to actualize. A type of rationality, then, differs according to specific goals aligned with distinct ideological precommitments and possibilities of action, and this variegation is applicable to modern scientific worldviews and pre-modern religions alike. What is more, within a single religious denomination the application of multiple rationalities is to be found: Thus, rather than being characterized by one particular type of rationality, we must expect different religious traditions to combine various manifestations of instrumental rationality (Weber’s Zweckrationalität, which tends towards the actualization of utilitarian goals) as well as substantive-value rationality (Wertrationalität, which underlies actions undertaken for the actualization of abstract human values and ideal types). Thus, for example, the Ismaili Fatimids embraced an effective political instrumental rationality in their realpolitik concurrently to the value-dominant intellectual practice of esoteric exegesis (Tawil) and Neoplatonic speculation. Esoteric exegesis was, in this context, subordinated to buttressing the institution of a concrete authority, namely the Imam. The prestige (amongst the Ismaili core) of the esoteric authority of the Imam was such that it may well have facilitated the ability of the Fatimid Imamate to order its administrative activity, along the lines of instrumental rationality, for example in its ability to innovate new, but still “Islamic” taxation categories to profit from the expanding Mediterranean trade. Substantive value-rationality, therefore, is not a code word for irrationality. The erection of values for thought in a society is not irrational, but a key for systemic coherence, since no propositions are possible without assuming certain initial postulates or non-negotiable values.

If values-based rationality can be detected in the social praxis of so-called esotericist communities, it is even more significant for us to take stock of explicitly rationalist discourses which challenge commonplace conceptions of reason’s antagonism to esotericism. Neoplatonism holds a place of distinction in the study of Western esotericism for particular epistemic framings, contemplative processes, and personal goals it assembles under the usage of human reason. The transformative potential that Neoplatonism attributes to human reason was so great in fact, that it promised its devotees a state of cognitive capacity transcending discursive reason and its products. Neoplatonic epistemology and psychology at a certain point devalues discursive rationality as fundamentally flawed in its reliance on contingent representational forms while offering its practitioners speculative practices and rituals as solutions to the viability of attaining truth in a type of transcendental meta-rational state. Neoplatonic approaches to the knowing rational subject also flatten the ontological divide between the human and the divine, an underappreciated legacy of late antique rationalism often forgotten in Western genealogies of reason which bowdlerize history in their quest for antecedents of secular European Enlightenment – despite the fact that this aspect of philosophia has historically manifested prominently in both Christian and Islamic traditions. The Shi`i intellectual practices that most embody these specific aspects of Neoplatonism, such as Ismailism and `Irfãn, are classified as esoteric or mystical due to such tendentious historiographies which cannot grant them full admission as "rationalism" despite the paramount role which rationality plays in them and their intellectual genealogies.

Intellectual Deep-Structures of Shi'ism

When thinking about Shi`i Muslim practice and its relationship to esotericism and rationalism, we are thus led to reject the primordialist, sect-specific identitarian frameworks that tend to obscure the regional, communal, and ideological trends which more concretely shape ideas and practices. The emergence of distinctive Shi`i forms of thought and piety are often treated wholesale by academics and journalists alike as a product of the civil wars (fitna, plural fitan) that the earliest Muslims underwent in the 7th century of the common era. In contrast to such political etiologies, however, specialists on the formation of the sects of Shi`ism tend to point to discursive developments in Shi`i doctrinal and hermeneutic norms that reflect more widely-diffused aspects of religious belief, scholarly discourse, and social practice in the metropoli of the late antique Near East.

Starting in the 8th century ce we can detect a form of self-representation within the flock of Ja`far al-Hãdiq based on a unique relationship to knowledge (`ilm) that eliminated the need for human speculation (rayy) in the domain of religious normativity. This played out hermeneutically in a rejection of scriptural analogy (qiyãs) for substantive law and a premium placed on unique interpretations of the Qurhan only accessible via the Imams.26 Thus, Imami Shi`ism as discourse in the Islamic marketplace of ideas took on its distinctive characteristics within Shi`ism and Islam less as a result of a primordial political split, and more due to its particular truth claims involving exclusive access to Imamic teachings, leading to the demotion of outsiders as "the general populace" (al-`ãmma). These truth claims established for Imamism its own positioning vis-à-vis Muslim society in terms of the "perfect" knowledge it claimed to possess and allow us to contextualize Imami engagements alongside those epistemic practices and rhetorical strategies alternately viewed in modern scholarship as rationalist, such as speculative theology (kalãm) and hermeneutics (uhül al-fiqh); or as esotericist, such as discussions of the bãhin in Islam, speculative mythopoetics, tahwïl, taqiyya, wahiyya as an initiatic chain, and so on. We should, of course, point out that these dichotomies remain ideal types, and one can find admixtures of both throughout the canonical sources.

The need to overcome the political etiology for Shi`i thought also has important implications for the quintessential topic of secrecy in Imami Shi`ism, discussed frequently through the term taqiyya, or "self-preservation." In recent talks and publications, Amir-Moezzi has characterizied taqiyya as the product of a singular type of violence played out on Shi`is supposedly for the sustained belief in Prophethood after Muhammad.27 This thesis not only lacks historical evidence, but problematically pits Imami martyrological logic and narratives of sectarian exceptionalism against a presumed orthodoxy more imagined than real. It also exaggerates the extent of societal knowledge of Shi`i beliefs, and fails to acknowledge that the most striking instances of violence against Shi`is in early Islamic history were done in response not for theological difference but for armed rebellions against the state, whether in the case of "mainstream" figures like Hujr b. `Adï, Zayd b. `Alï, and al-Nafs al-Zakiyya – but also in the most controversial "exaggerators" such as Abü Manhür al-`Ijlï and Abü-l-KhahTãb who incurred the ire of the authorities and met their demise due to their armed political activity, not doctrine.

Etan Kohlberg's systematic exposition of the polyvalence of Shi`i taqiyya reminds us of the diverse manner that "self-preservational" dissimulation with outsiders might take regarding specific doctrines and practices in distinct contexts. It could be as simple as acting prudently in mixed company, or a formalized juridical understanding between man and God about the extent of one's need to dissimulate under duress, and finally, there was an esoteric variety which was not conditioned by political necessity, but by the inherent exigencies of esoteric knowledge. Shi`i speculative mythopoetics as a discursive practice does not find its raison d'être in political ressentiment nor can the underlying values underlying esoteric systems of initiation be seen as such. Shi`ism is not inherently esotericist due to its minoritarian position in Islam or antagonism with a supposed mainstream; rather, what manifests as the "esoteric" in Shi`i thought reflects particular strategies of socio-epistemic value-ideation shaped by distinct social and intellectual contexts, some inherited from the past (such as Islamic "origins"), while others are newly-arising, embodied in the social and intellectual structures of Umayyad and Abbasid societies.

A Problem for the Field: The Term "Ghulãt"

One significant impediment to progress for the formulation of more precise models for the interplay between esotericism, reason and authority in Shi`i thought is that esotericism in Imami Shi`ism has been infelicitously colored by the word "extremism," based on an inexact translation of the Arabic polemical term ghulãt ("exaggerators"). A more developed field than Shi`i Studies is today would ideally have dispensed with the use of such a loaded terminology, and it is hoped that we can in the future replace it with more precise terms; the shortcomings of possible alternatives like "Gnosticism" have already been highlighted elsewhere. Other terms are, however, available. In this volume, Rizvi usefully proposes the "maximalist conception of Imamology" as a way of precisely identifying one aspect of Imam-centric cosmology which is often branded as "ghuluww". Adem re-evaluates the use of "theophanic" to describe broad trends of "exaggerator" Muslim theology, and Hayes discusses the "political idealism" of said "exaggerator" groups that allowed them to reinterpret political events to conform with their cosmological doctrines. While such terminologies work their way through the scholarly ecosystem, it seems inevitable that, in the meantime, the unhelpful moniker of ghulãt will continue to be used, but if so, it should be understood that it requires considerable qualification.

The major justification for perpetuating the usage of the terms ghuluww and ghulãt is that they are quite prevalent in our textual sources. Used internally by Shi`is to critique their peers who believed in the divinity of the Imams, the Arabic term ghulãt was lexically extracted from the Qur'anic critique of Christian beliefs concerning Jesus. Academic approaches to Shi`i "exaggerators" have hitherto focused on the extra-Islamic sources for the divinization of imams to explain their "heterodoxy," thereby emphasizing the formative backdrop of diverse Christian, Manichaean, Jewish, and other Near Eastern religious forms in the newly conquered Islamicate territory of Iraq. But such genealogies are no formula for defining heterodoxy: not just the ghulãt, but Islam as a whole was heir to late antique Near Eastern religious and philosophical forms, the "orthodox" as much as the "heterodox." The existence of pre-Islamic conceptual roots for Islamic religious forms should be no surprise; but it is striking how the imagination of academics has been captured by how the religious backdrop of the young caliphate's non-Muslim subjects provided the visionary repertoire by which Shi`ism's earliest ghulãt most deviated from Islamic doctrinal norms. The genealogy of "millennialist" and "antinomian" elements of Imami Shi`ism, those most predisposed to Mahdist "revolution" or the instauration of a new religious order or dispensation, have been associated with eclectic religious forms and ethnic milieus which contrasted with the broader shared values of the urban Arab elites at Islamic origins.

It is necessary, though difficult, to undo the sway of this culture-clash etiology from our understanding of Shi`i ghuluww and esotericism in general. The politicized angle predominates in discussions of Shi`i origins as a whole, despite the fact that the sustained epistemic and hermeneutic norms of the Shi`i "school tradition", by which Shi`ism was preserved as religious practice over centuries, display their own internal logic which makes such politicized speculations a moot point.

Much more than a politicized sectarian frame of the Arabo-Mesopotamian milieu, Imami "esotericism" finds its core in the universalist figure of the Imam, a uniquely Islamic intellectual product, in as much as it resolves problems of meaning primarily intelligible to the Islamic worldview of "believers" and the questions posed by adherents to its community. Imamology, as it is sometimes called, involved extended reflections on the Qur'an, the Deity of whom it speaks, Islamic worship, the standing of the Muslim believer, and the nature of universal religious authority in light of the Islamic dispensation. All these elements form the basis of the esoteric Imami tradition which is too readily flattened down to an essentialized "foreign" or "heterodox" sentiment as opposed to a distinctive brand of Islamic theology which arose organically from the intellectual and political raw materials at the disposal of the Muslim community, equally part of the "Islamic" as the disparate late antique elements that were forged into the Sunni synthesis.

The Islamic Vernacular of Esoteric Shi'ism's Central Binary of Meaning

In as much as what is studied now specifically as "esoteric Shi`ism" is framed by an external taxonomy, it does entail a discrete set of general characteristics. It emphasizes the abstraction of the figures of the Prophet Muhammad and his cousin and son-in-law `Alï within a binary that represent a duality of religion as encountered on the societal and individual level. The oral sayings (hadith) in currency within a broader Islamic milieu in this light took on greater significance, such as Muhammad's supposed statement to `Alï: "You will fight over the interpretation (tahwïl) of the Qur'an just as I fought over its revelation (tanzïlihi)." This was interpreted as a delegation of roles between the two figures, one which also found a particular proof-text in the Qur'anic address to Muhammad, "You are only a warner, and every people has its guide (wa-li-kulli qawmin hãdin)," which inspired the Shi`i understanding that Muhammad had been the "warner," while `Alï had been the "guide." This is understood in early Shi`i tafsïr to mean that Muhammad had brought the Islamic religion nominally adhered to by all, and that `Alï had brought the exclusive keys to its understanding, an understanding inherited by the subsequent Imams.

A critical disjuncture between mere exclusivism and the structure of esoteric thought characteristic of the Shi`i tradition is the particular manner in which the bifurcation of exoteric and esoteric religion is delegated between Muhammad and `Alï, not as the historical accident of political crisis, but – critically – as a timeless religious archetype played out in every cycle (dawr) of sacred history. Within Ismailism and Nuhayrism this is extended out to the fullest conclusion and has led to their particular association with a so-called "cyclical" vision of religion. The religious visionary referred to here, however, can be also be thought of as an extension of the Arabic and Qur'anic hermeneutic of Islam, embodied in the Qur'anic text's underlying "prophetology" as described by Sidney Griffith. These theologians focused on the binary of the theophanic "name" (ism) and the "meaning" (ma`nã) represented by Muhammad and `Alï, respectively. The so-called "esoteric interpretation" or tahwïl of esoteric Shi`ism is merely the practice of making these interpretive structures explicit in every manifestation of religion.

The way the relationship between prophet, imam, and their intermediaries was conceived had deep implications for the articulation of thought as well as the elaboration of institutional representations of the Imamate as an expression of authority in broader society. The Gates (bãb, pl. abwãb) and agents of Imami Shi`ism ultimately gave way to professional scholars as spokesmen of divine guidance in Twelver Shi`ism, but not without a struggle between trained mutakallims and charismatic intermediaries to the divine, a struggle whose echoes continue to resound until modern times as Cancian's contribution to this volume makes clear. Classical Nuhayrism and Ismailism, on the other hand, continued to derive the symbolic hermeneutics of the theophanic model as it intersected with the existence of an initiatic elite accompanying the Godhead's appearance over religious history. Nuhayrism retained the archaic forms replete with metempsychosis and perennial manifestations of God and his elect hierarchy. In Ismailism, this was replaced by the ever-present Hudüd, ranks of initiates who represented varying degrees of ontological and hermeneutic knowledge.

The old slogan of the esoterics, "Religion is knowing who men are (al-dïn ma`rifat al-rijãl)," a type of spiritual ad hominem, measured the proximity or distance of the human to the Imam as divine theophany through an illuminated insight only granted by initiation. Both groups were infamous among the greater populace for advocating a dispensation from the sharī`a in a present or future state: they did so precisely because of the primacy of the onto-anthropological structure of religious authority over the outwardly articulated forms of the Qurhan's message.

This abstracted structuring of religion was the central "secret" safeguarded by esoteric Shi`ism as its own distinct brand of perfect knowledge. The social capital found in Shi`i esotericism as a form of Islamic scholarship is found in the devices it uses to explain a broader sacrohistorical framework culminating in Islam. It is valued precisely because it answers questions of meaning for Islam within a completely self-consistent form – self-consistent because of its tautological affirmation of the eternality of its own historical forms – and operating apart from the discursive reasoning of broader Muslim scholarship. This perfected "interpretation of Islam" is what esoteric Shi`ism explains itself to be in the Islamicate marketplace of ideas, creating a perfected harmony between socio-historical structures and the semantic markers of ideology. However much a degree of separation might be presumed of esotericist Shi`i writers, they were, in fact, situated within an early economy of knowledge, assuring that their ideas existed on a continuum of broader religious scholarship in Islam, and as such had their own localized authorities, scholarly exchanges and debates, and pedagogically-oriented texts, which mirrored developments found among their counterparts in a broader Islamic context, and within an exclusivist soteriology expressed completely in the vernacular of Islam.

Shi'i Rationalities at the Crossroads

The historical course of this esoteric tendency in Shi`ism in its persistent forms is to be contrasted with an increasingly influential trajectory for Imami authors since the 4th/10th and 5th/11th centuries which has colored our understanding of the relative place of esotericism and rationalism in Shi`ism. Not reducible to Buyid cosmopolitanism, or mere "influence" by Mu`tazilites, this was predicated on very specific changes within broader Islamic discourse at large. Discursive developments in Muslim intellectual centers such as Basra and Baghdad demanded that reason (al-`aql) be called upon to derive certain knowledge (`ilm) as an incontrovertible argument (hujja) of truth. Much more than is commonly recognized, reason had become an arbiter of Islamic universality in merit of its acquisition of positive value with the rise of

Islamic kalãm and the Arabization of Hellenistic philosophia over the course of 2nd–3rd/ 8th–9th centuries.

Shi`i adoption of reason's universality in the mode of kalãm in particular meant that truth claims were to be made in the agreed-upon terms of a broader intellectual discourse and that Shi`i scholars rearticulated their exclusive truth claims within the scope of a set of epistemic and ethical concerns shared by a broader Muslim audience. The moral objectivism at the heart of Mu`tazilï kalãm, for example, allowed Twelver mutakallimün to argue, without recourse to tradition, for the obligation of a truly beneficent God to provide an impeccable authority for all of humanity's needs: that is, the Imam. This new mode of grounding Imami normativity enabled the assertion of the rational necessity of an imam not physically evident who performed a soteriological function of grace (luhf) distinct from his function as a mouthpiece of positive law; the latter role was to be fulfilled instead by Twelver Shi`i jurists who fully integrated themselves into broader rationalist discourses on kalãm philosophical theology, hermeneutics (uhül al-fiqh), and Qur'anic exegesis (tafsïr) over the 3rd/9th to 5th/11th centuries.

While the scholarly practices of early "Uhülï" tradition predominate over our understanding of Islamic "rationalism" for Shi`ism and Sunnism alike, it is imperative that they be contrasted with the alternate path of rationalism simultaneously adopted by Ismaili thinkers of the 4th/10th century, that of Neoplatonism. Rejecting kalãm's skeptical, atomist, and epistemically representationalist view of human and universe, they opted for a metaphysical and naturalistic unity bound by the actualizing power of emanated Reason. The entirety of religion was presented as a celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchy reflecting the great chain of being known by Neoplatonic meta-rational inspiration of the soul (tahyïd). This cosmic order was to be read in nature and the world's major religions as a symbol of absolute order and authority, with the Imamate described as a manifestation of the "rational normativity" (amr) necessitated by an entity beyond being and non-being.

The more emphatic claims about the anthropological and cosmological role of reason and rationality were undoubtedly made at the time by the Ismailis, but within a framework openly antithetical to the prevalent modes of reasoning practiced by theologians, jurists, and Qur'anic exegetes which Twelver Shi`is increasingly advanced for a broader readership. In the Safavid period, however, Twelver political hegemony in Iran allowed for the type of cultural confidence which allowed for the embrace of particularistic and “exaggerated” modes of Imamology previously suppressed (though never completely) as too “esoteric” or similar to the so-called ghulãt. This in turn may have been facilitated by the adoption of Neoplatonizing Sufi theosophies from Sunnï discourse which allowed for the “naturalization” of the terms of hiero-ontological authority (walãya) for the Imam within the broadening cosmopolitan discourse of Islam’s post-classical period.

The literature of Shi`i school-traditions as they reach us from the past in both canonical and non-canonical texts serve as an archive of various stances toward particularism and universalism with relationship to the arbitration of truth, in as much as they reflect the currency of those values in a greater Islamicate marketplace of knowledge. They reveal to us when “playing by the rules” of external arbiters of reason increases as a social value as opposed to an anti-discursive Neoplatonic rationalism or exclusivist Shi`i mythopoetical speculation, or when the harmonization of both is believed to be possible.

In the 20th century, Shi`i discourses of legitimacy have intersected with communicative-value based rationalism, whether in the uncertain process of ijtihãd by Twelver scholars and politicians, or the consensus-based project of universal human rights of the Agha Khan. Yet the strategy of presenting religion as a transhistorical “identity” provides an impetus for exceptionalist modes of self-representation that do not recognize the historical labors necessary for such processes of harmonization. For some, contemplation of the historical contingency of these processes may form a conceptual red-line for the viability of a modern religious identitarian project. Yet more must be done to surpass that consideration in freeing the study of Shi`ism from sectarian exceptionalism; i.e., a presupposed radical alterity which invalidates the study of its historical development along common sociological processes as an ontological betrayal of its “authentic” essence. This stance renders Shi`ism an esoteric trust unintelligible to any outsider and overturns its academic study, a position which must be flatly rejected.

The Chapters

Various aspects of authority in the Shi`i tradition, both exoteric and esoteric, are treated in this volume. Contributions span conceptualizations of the Imam's authority as a socially-embedded and politicized individual (Hayes), as the source of statements or texts which either clarify revelatory scripture or require further interpretation themselves (Qutbuddin, Walker, Warner, Cancian), and a theophanic entity (Adem, Rizvi). Attention is likewise given to the various modes of authority embodied by the Imam's proxies such as "Gates" (bãbs) and missionaries (dãhïs) (Adem, Hayes, Qutbuddin, Walker), Twelver Shi`i scholars and exegetes (Warner, Rizvi, Cancian), and Shi`i Sufis (Cancian), each of whom claim a special relationship with Imamic or divine authority through the mastery of their own specific forms of knowledge.

Adem's chapter reintroduces the study of early Ismailism as a variety of early esoteric Shi`ism, in conversation with scholarly discussions by Massignon and Corbin that have been elided in past decades. The roots of early Ismaili doctrinal origins are reconsidered with respect to beliefs about the Imam and the unique ranks of the Imam's followers. The distinctly theophanic vision of the Imamate held by the influential "Mukhammisa" (Pentadist) body of esoteric doctrines in 3rd/9th century Shi`ism is highlighted as an important source for the Ismaili perennialist vision of religious truth, an influence readily acknowledged with respect to the sources of early Nuhayrism. Special attention is given to the language of theophany, speculations on the primordial duality of Muhammad and `Alï as "speaking" and "silent," and the hierarchy of religious dignitaries headed by the Salmãn al-Fãrisï as "Gate" (bãb,) in Mukhammisa teachings as inspiration for the Ismaili religious worldview and hudüd religious hierarchy. Adem frames his investigations with a discussion of how contemporary research has ignored these themes in favor of a political or "dynastic" interpretation of Ismailism colored by the specific genesis of modern Ismaili studies.

Hayes's contribution is a detailed reconstruction of the historical circumstances of the counter-Imamate of Ja`far b. `Alï detto "the Liar", the man who was, for a time, the widely recognized 12th or 13th Imam of the Imami Shi`a, in opposition to the claims of a hidden 12th Imam who was later canonized. Hayes shows that what are usually considered separate political entities (the esotericist ghulãt and rationalist "mainstream" Imamis) were in fact, not clearly to be demarcated from each other as distinct political entities in the years before and after the Occultation. Instead, both orientations can be detected on either side of the major split that arose following the death of the eleventh canonical Imam, al-hasan al-`Askarï, between the established agents loyal to the deceased Imam, and the followers of his brother Ja`far "the Liar". Instead of seeking to conflate political loyalties with doctrinal orientations, we should instead see how doctrines influenced the reception of political events. Thus, Hayes argues, we can see a certain kind of literalist rationalism as tending towards a "political realism" (epitomized by the Fahhï Imamis) and resulting in the explicit acceptance of inconvenient political facts, which can be contrasted with "political idealism" which explained them away. The latter orientation allowed for the editing or reinterpretation of the outward form of political events in order to fit with pre-existing doctrines and cosmologies: for example, giving rise to the more esoterically-oriented doctrine of the hidden Imam. Political realists and political idealists, however, could and did find themselves taking up a common cause, as in the case of the alliance between the Kufan fahhiyya and the ghulãt followers of Fãris b. hãtim under the banner of the Imamate of Ja`far "the Liar".

Warner asseses the extent and role of esoteric concerns in an early Twelver Shi`i hadith compendium, the Kitãb `Ilal al-sharã°i` of Ibn Bãbawayh. Though this work has often been treated as a source of esoteric knowledge, the purpose of its composition remains unclear, due both to the unusual nature of the work, and the transitional period of Imami intellectual history in which it was written. Retrieving the author's discursive positionality via an analysis of the `Ilal's organization and its comparison to contemporaneous works, Warner's study uncovers a work whose primary concern is not hidden knowledge per se but rather upholding the authority of the Imams' hadith within a burgeoning economy of knowledge that straddled legal, ethical, mystical, and literary discourses in early Islam. Warner's study reminds us of the plasticity of hadith scholarship's role in Shi`i thought, one that cannot be reduced to mere "traditionalism."

Qutbuddin and Walker both analyze Ismaili ta° vïl hermeneutics, and its relationship to esotericism and rationality, with, however, substantially different emphases.

Qutbuddin presents the legacy of mature Fatimid esoteric hermeneutics or ta° vïl as developed by eleventh century dã`ï al-Mu'ayyad al-Shïrãzï (d. 470/1078); a practice which has enjoyed almost a millennium of continuity up into the present Bohra Ismaili community. Focusing on the texts of al-Mu'ayyad's Cairene teaching sessions, al-Majãlis al-Mu°ayyadiyya, Qutbuddin lays out the strikingly rationalist program of the "esoteric" exegesis comprised therein in ten principles that together constitute the Fatimids' system of symbolic scriptural interpretation (ta° vïl). They are: (1) the rationality of faith; (2) the inversion of the literary perception of real and figurative; (3) the harmonization of the physical and spiritual worlds; (4) the mutual validation of the exoteric and esoteric aspects of the Shari`a; (5) the substance of ta° vïl manifest in God's unity, God's call, and the system and hierarchy of spiritual ascension;(6) the concept of living history, with the stories of the prophets reflected in Muhammad's mission; (7) the methodology of ta° vïl, presented through scriptural evidence and rational proofs; (8) ta° vïl as the true knowledge integral to salvation; (9) the sole authority of the divinely-guided prophet, legatee and Imam to interpret the Qur'an and Shari`a; and (10) the rationale for Tawil. Together, these principles form a coherent hermeneutic for the Fatimids' understanding of the message of the Qur'an and the precepts of the Islamic Shari`a.

By contrast, Walker emphasizes the more ad hoc, case-specific nature of Fatimid tahwïl as exemplified in an earlier, less institutionalized phase of the dahwa in tenth century North Africa. Walker goes on to compare instructive examples of tahwïl from four Ismaili authorities spanning the 4th/10th to early 5th/11th centuries CE: Ibn al-Haytham, Abü-l-`Abbãs (brother of the famous dãhï Abü `Abdallãh al-Shi'i), Abü Ya`qüb al-Sijistãni, and hamid al-Din al-Kirmãni. In this treatment, Walker emphasizes the political utility of a tahwïl-based system in which knowledge can only be accessed through a system of initiation by authorities within the hierarchy. This system, then, had the advantage both of giving members a sense of participating in something special which bound them uniquely to it; it also afforded higher members of the hierarchy a unique authority amongst their brethren.

Rizvi argues against the commonplace assumption that esotericist and “extremist” attitudes to the Imamate suddenly erupted in the Safavid period, pointing to the development of maximalist readings of Imamology already by the 14th and 15th centuries ce. These developments were part of a “neo-classicism” that presaged more well-known manifestations of the same in the Safavid-era scholarship, exemplified in a sanguine attitude towards the controversial apocalyptic traditions of the Imams’ “return” (rajha) taught by 8th century hadith narrator Jãbir al-Ju`fi; they also entailed the seeds of what is known as walãya takwïniyya, a particularly maximalist formulation of Imamic authority that drew on recent developments in Sufi theosophy. The lives and works of Imami scholars Rajab al-Bursi and al-hasan b. Sulaymãn al-hilli are drawn upon by Rizvi to trace out this trajectory in Imami thought within broader intellectual currents in Iran, Iraq and beyond in the pre-Safavid period, and force us to reconsider our historical mapping of Imami esotericism and rationalism in the field of Islamic studies.

Cancian demonstrates the sociopolitical dimensions operative within the theoretical understanding of spiritual leadership among the Sufi orders of 18th to 20th century Iran. Despite the overt profession of adhesion to the tenets of modern Uhüli Shi`ism made on different occasions by the Gunãbãdi Sufis, their approach to the question of spiritual leadership remains problematic, to say the least, if analyzed against the usual enunciation of the theory of marjahiyya in Twelver Shi`ism. Cancian addresses this problem by analyzing the ideas of Sulhãn `Ali Shãh Gunãbãdi, the eponymous master of the order.

The literature produced by the Ni`matullãhï Sufi masters and intellectuals is punctuated with occasional outcries against the ignorance and arrogance of the “exoteric” scholars: the hulamã-ye hãhir. Their record of persecution suffered, even quite recently, speaks of a troubled relationship that never came to the point of an accommodation. In this respect, Gunãbãdï literature has hitherto been largely unexplored. Cancian’s investigation into the textual corpus of this Sufi brotherhood, therefore, allows a better understanding of this relationship. Sulhãn `Alï Shãh in particular seems to have proposed a binary structure of religious authority, whereby the fuqahã' are seen as custodians of one aspect of the walãya through an uninterrupted chain of transmission parallel to the one through which the Sufis have received their share of spiritual authority. Sulhãn `Alï Shãh, in other words, proposed an alliance between the fuqahã' and the Sufis whose unity he holds to have been broken during the Safavid era. It is clear from Cancian's chapter that the rational and the esoteric cannot be clearly demarcated or quarantined off from each other, if properly defined, they do represent distinct poles of enquiry and experience which are both legitimate objects of enquiry for the academic researcher, but also clearly identified as distinctions with a real significance for Shi`i actors throughout history. He shows that although the intellectual lineage of the Gunãbâdï order is coherent, it must also be seen as reacting to the changing nature of political authority in Iran more generally, including the crystallization of the theory of marjhiyya among the "exoteric" fuqahã', who by the 19th century had taken on a triumphantly "rationalist" Uhülï guise. As Cancian shows, the Sufi masters expressed complicated responses towards these "exoteric rationalists" oscillating between rivalry and indignant reproach, and an uneasy recognition of separate domains of authority, comparable to the division between the classical division between law-giving prophets and the Imamic expounding of the interior dimensions of spiritual practice. <>

REVELATION IN THE QUR'AN: A SEMANTIC STUDY OF THE ROOTS N-Z-L AND W-H-Y by Simon P. Loynes. [Series: Texts and studies on the Qur'an, Brill, ISBN 9789004451056]

In **REVELATION IN THE QUR'AN: A SEMANTIC STUDY OF THE ROOTS N-Z-L AND W-H-Y** Simon P. Loynes presents a semantic study of the Arabic roots n-z-l and w-ḥ-y in order to elucidate the modalities of revelation in the Qur'an. Through an exhaustive analysis of their occurrences in the Qur'an, and with reference to pre-Islamic poetry, Loynes argues that the two roots represent distinct occurrences, with the former concerned with spatial events and the latter with communicative. This has significant consequences for understanding the Qur'an's unique concept of revelation and how this is both in concord and at variance with earlier religious traditions.

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The Qur'an is commonly referred to as 'revelation' in both scholarly circles and in popular parlance. This view of the Qur'an is not without foundation as it is both the founding text of Islam and at the very heart of the religion. Moreover, it is quite appropriately drawing attention to the divine nature of the text. The word clearly carries with it echoes of its Jewish-Christian origins. This, in itself, is not necessarily a problem: it is possible to use 'revelation' as a mere technical term. But what exactly constitutes 'revelation' and the specific processes involved therein within the Qur'an can only be validated through a systematic investigation of the text itself. The Qur'an contains numerous references that refer to its own genesis, so the researcher is in a fortunate position to answer this question. In fact, one scholar has recently characterised the Qur'an as 'the most meta-textual and self-referential holy text known in the history of world religions'.

There are two terms in the Qur'an which have been understood to refer to 'revelation': one is tanzïl 'sending down' and the other is wahy 'communication' as well as their cognate verbal forms.[2] This backwards reading—that is, starting with a definition from outside the text itself and applying it to terms within the text—has led to an underlying supposed synonymity between the two terms, as both are usually understood to indicate the process of revealing, in certain ways, the revelatory message. What, then, might be the result if this reading is set aside and a thorough philological investigation of the roots n-z-l and w-h-y is conducted, based upon their usage in the Qur'anic text itself? It is, of course, possible that the two roots in their Qur'anic contexts might be very closely related, even resulting in a possible case of synonymity, but it is equally possible that a dichotomy might emerge between them. If the latter is the case, this would have important consequences for the understanding of revelation in the Qur'an, and at the same time it would shed light on the rhetorical features of the Qur'an's self-referentiality.

Although there has been no exhaustive study of the roots n-z-l and w-h-y in the Qur'an, given their importance to understanding the Qur'an's presentation of its origin, it is unsurprising that both roots have received considerable attention in earlier scholarship. It has already been intimated that both roots have been understood to represent a single process in the Qur'an, but it remains to be seen why scholars have drawn this conclusion.

The Roots n-z-l and w-h-y in Previous Scholarship

The fact that the roots n-z-l and w-h-y have been considered to a certain extent synonymous, or at least covering a similar semantic range and thus indicative of a single process in the Qur'an, is evident from the beginning of Western critical scholarship. The earliest scholarship only dealt with the roots in passing, but important observations were made nonetheless.

Theodore Nöldeke and Friedrich Schwally (1909) observed that the serious reflection in the Qur'an about its divine origin is evident in the frequency of 'certain expressions for "to reveal"' (offenbaren), which they relate to both wahy 'revelation' (Offenbarung) and its verbal form awhã 'to reveal', as well as to the root n-z-l when it is referring to the 'coming down of revelation' (Herabkommen der Offenbarung). Both roots are reduced to a single role in the Qur'an— the 'revealing' of revelation. This is not to say that the roots were considered exactly synonymous, as Nöldeke/Schwally alluded to the importance of pre-Islamic poetry for understanding the semantics of the root w-h-y, wherein they maintained that it was applied to 'mysterious and puzzling' forms of commu-nication. It was also posited that the noun wahy refers to writing in the Qur'an on account of its meaning in pre-Islamic poetry—an observation based upon Ignác Goldziher's analysis of the pre-Islamic poets' usage of the word to refer to writing and inscriptions.

The idea that the roots n-z-l and w-h-y are indicative of a single process is evident in the work of Joseph Horovitz (1926) who characterised the verbs nazzala and anzala as well as the verb awhã as indicating the 'transmission' (Übermittlung) of revelation.6 Despite this, he maintained that the spatial implications of 'sending down' (Herabsenden) are indicative of the revelation's heavenly origin and that the noun wahy refers everywhere to 'inspiration (Eingebung) or similar', rejecting Nöldeke's notion that it signifies writing in the Qur'an. Horovitz also looked to pre-Islamic poetry to understand the word wahy, and it was this that led him to speculate that it may have been employed because writing supposedly conveyed a sense of mysteriousness to the Bedouins. This claim, however, is now hard to uphold given that late antique Arabia is somewhat more literate than previously thought.

The first scholar to devote considerable attention to the various Qur'anic contexts of the roots n-z-l and w-h-y was Arthur Jeffery (1950), who understood the roots as synonymous in certain verses. For Jeffery, the spatial element in sending down poses no problems as the premise that God resides in heaven and mankind on earth was already well known in the ancient Near East, and therefore any message from God would necessarily need to be sent down. Unlike scholars before him, Jeffery did not consider the pre-Islamic settings of the root w-h-y, and he paid little attention to the noun wahy in the Qur'an, which he translated as 'revelation' without explanation. In contrast to this, he did devote considerable attention to the verb awhã, and argued that it is used in two senses: an earlier 'primitive' type, which indicates a general 'inspiration' to say or do something—such as when God prompts Moses to throw his staff (Q 7:117), or the bees to take their home in the mountains (Q 16:68)—to a more technical meaning, 'revelation', which is the revealing of 'Scripture' to prophets, (e.g., Q 16:63). Nevertheless, Jeffery fails to consider that in all these verses the verb is indicating a communication process. That Jeffery considered the root n-z-l as a metaphor for revealing is explicitly made when he states that it is in this second sense that the verb awhã is 'practically identical with nazzala (anzala).'

In stark contrast to Jeffery, Richard Bell (1953) interpreted the noun wahy and the verb awhã to refer to 'suggestion' regardless of whether the individual verse is within a context which seems to be offering something more 'scriptural'. Bell goes on to explain that the fundamental sense of the word wahy is the communication of an idea by quick suggestion, an interpretation he bolsters by referring to a similar reading found in classical Arabic dictionaries. This is problematic given that such dictionaries are not, of course, independent from Islamic tradition. His interpretation is also no doubt heavily influenced by his works on the composition of the Qur'an, which stress the atomistic nature of its composition: for Bell, as wahy is indicative of a quick suggestion this means that the passages composed must be, out of necessity, comparatively short. Unfortunately, Bell offered no reflection on the role of the root n-z-l and as Watt pointed out, it is unclear how he considers the relationship between the two in his theory of revelation.

Toshihiko Izutsu (1964) understood revelation in the Qur'an as a 'linguistic communication' between God and man, and he identified both wahy 'revelation' and tanzïl 'sending down' and their cognate verbal forms as reflecting an exceptional communication process. Izutsu gave the root n-z-l very little attention, although he maintained that the spatial element of sending down indicates that it can only be applied to 'supernatural communication' because only that can be said to be 'sent down', presumably because it is God who resides in heaven.19 Regarding the root w-h-y, he turned to pre-Islamic poetry to understand its Qur'anic meaning and observed that the verb awhã indicates a type of mysterious esoteric communication, which he linked with the nominal wahy 'writing' on account of its apparently mysterious character to the Bedouins, an observation suggested earlier by Horovitz and which, as mentioned, can no longer be upheld.20 Izutsu goes on to argue that the verb awhã has two meanings in the Qur'an: there is a 'pre-technical' usage, which is not necessarily verbal and a type of prompting to action, and a 'technical', which is the verbal revelation of scripture. The division is reminiscent of Jeffery's, but instead of it being based upon a notion of scripturality per se, it is based upon Izutsu's theory that revelation must be verbal. Despite his valuable in-depth analysis of the root w-h-y in pre-Islamic poetry and thus its particular semantics, it is clear that much of his observations are predicated upon his theory of verbal revelation.

Montgomery Watt (1988) analysed the root w-h-y in the Qur'an, and while seemingly unaware of Isutzu's and Jeffery's work, concluded that it is used in both a technical and pre-technical sense depending on whether he considered the verses as referring to non-verbal or verbal revelation. The divisions between the uses of the verb awhã are again not based upon a close reading of the relevant verses, but rather upon a premise brought from outside the text: Watt's view of the 'verbal' nature of revelation, which he maintains were 'collected to form the Qur'an'. Much like the scholars before him, Watt considered the root w-h-y (when used in the 'technical' sense) as practically synonymous with the root n-z-l as he argued that the latter is indicative of the same process of verbal revelation.

Thus far it is evident that the root w-h-y has gained the lion's share of the scholarly interest. This trend was, to a certain extent, corrected by Stefan Wild (1996) in an article devoted to the spatial and temporal implications of sending down. Despite its principal subject, Wild follows Izutsu and states at the outset that the root n-z-l represents God's 'divine communication with man', as opposed to attempting to prove this proposition from the Qur'anic text itself.

Wild, nonetheless, reiterates that the notion of sending down is indicative of a two-tier universe where God resides in heaven and mankind on earth. He then attempts to link the spatial aspect with a temporal one in which he argues that the Qur'anic revelation was sent down over time, albeit most of the evidence adduced is extra-Qur'anic in support of this.

Following Wild, Daniel Madigan (2001) highlighted the two-tier theological premise evident in the spatial element of sending down and explicitly characterised it as a 'spatial metaphor for revelation' wherein 'the direction of communication is always downward'. Madigan clearly acknowledges the importance of the spatial aspect of the root n-z-l but still considers this to represent a form of communication. He also drew attention to Izutsu's interpretation of the root w-h-y in pre-Islamic poetry regarding its esoteric meaning and highlights that it is not solely devoted to religious activity in the Qur'an—for example, 'the devils' (al-shayãhïn) are agents of the verb awhã (e.g., Q 6:121). Like Horovitz before him, he rejected any notion that the noun wahy refers to writing in the Qur'an and argued that it need not necessarily be understood in such a technical sense in pre-Islamic poetry either. In contrast to Jeffery, Izutsu, and Watt, but in harmony with Bell, he argues that a single meaning can be applied to the verb awhã, which he prefers to translate as 'communication', understanding that it usually refers to divine communication. Both roots are, again, interpreted as indicative of a communication process.

Two further studies have offered some additional valuable observations. Angelika Neuwirth (2010) in her monumental work Der Koran als Text der Spätantike: Ein europäischer Zugang noted the spatial element of the root n-z-l but interpreted it as a metaphor that relates to a 'vertical communication (vertikalen Vermittlung) of the divine message'. She contextualised this reading by referring to the 'vertically' conceived supernatural communication associated with pre-Islamic poetic inspiration, as well the 'descent' of Jesus Christ from heaven in the Nicene Creed (rendered in Arabic as nazala mina 'l-samãh). Neither of these sources in and of themselves, however, necessarily support the notion that the root n-z-l refers to a mode of communication, let alone whether this is the case for the root in the Qur'an itself. Neuwirth only briefly considered the verb awhã, which she understood to mean 'inspired, indicated by signs, suggested'—a reading which is largely in line with classical Arabic dictionaries— and indicative of the 'act of inspiration' (Sachverhalt des Eingebens), although she did note that its content is not necessarily always 'revelation' but can also take the form of 'pragmatic suggestions' (pragmatische Anregungen). Although the word wahy occurs far fewer times than the verb awhã, Neuwirth has extensively discussed the term. Like earlier scholars Neuwirth looked to pre-Islamic poetry to make sense of the word, although she went further than earlier scholarship and argued that it refers to an unintelligible 'writing', and posited that the poets' use of it to mirror the ruins of encampments was to produce a feeling of 'aporia and loss' in the listener. This meaning, Neuwirth maintains, was inverted in the Qur'an as it is there a 'wahy of fulfilment', that is, it indicates the ultimate communication, a 'revelation'. Whether the term wahy is quite so inverted as Neuwirth suggests is open to doubt, as will be shown in the course of this work, but it is clear that a careful reading of the root w-h-y in pre-Islamic poetry is undoubtedly a prerequisite for understanding its meaning.

In a book-length study of the Qur'an's self-referential discourse, Anne-Sylvie Boisliveau (2014) devoted considerable attention to the root n-z-l and w-h-y and understands both roots as involved with the process of how the text was 'revealed' (révélé) or 'inspired' (inspiré). Despite this commonality with earlier scholarship, which considers both roots as representing a communication process, Boisliveau usefully distinguishes between the two roots in terms of their function wherein she maintains that the root n-z-l underscores that the revelation originates from God and underlines God's high status with respect to men and His absolute authority. Regarding the root w-h-y, she argues that when this is employed this highlights the verbal aspect of the mode of revelation as it is 'verbally inspired' (inspiré verbalement) to the Messenger. The latter postulation, however, is predicated on Izutsu's theory of verbal revelation as opposed to any new data offered from a close reading of its Qur'anic contexts.

From the preceding discussion it is possible to conclude that there are three primary themes that emerge from the studies of the roots n-z-l and w-h-y and their relationship to revelation in the Qur'an. The first is that while the spatial element of the verbs nazzala and anzala as well as the verbal noun tanzïl is acknowledged to a certain extent, this meaning is subordinated to a metaphorical interpretation whereby by being 'sent down' the revelation is 'revealed', 'transmitted', or 'communicated'. It is also noteworthy that this leap in meaning from a literal 'descent' to a metaphorical 'revealing' is never explained, only assumed. This is also evident in many Qur'an translations in which the verbs nazzala and anzala are translated as 'to reveal', as well as other scholarly works that do not engage directly with the root n-z-l but take this reading for granted. The second theme is that the word wahy and its cognate verb awhã have been interpreted in various ways, often with recourse to its usage in pre-Islamic poetry. While there is a consensus that it represents an exceptional modality of the way that God communicates in the Qur'an, there is much divergence in how this should be understood, whether there is a development of the term, as well as how much its Qur'anic meaning relates to, or even represents an inversion of, its pre-Islamic meaning. The third theme is that because most scholars demote the spatial element of sending down to a largely metaphorical status, there is an imposed degree of synonymity between the two terms, which results in their being assigned a single role in the modality of revelation: by ‘sending down’ (tanzïl) God reveals the revelatory message, as He also does through ‘communication’ (wahy). This problem is thrown into stark relief by Andrew Rippin in his entry on wahy in the second edition of the Encyclopaedia of Islam, when he states that the ‘relationship of wahy to tanzïl only makes the picture more complex, for the semantic range of the latter word appears to duplicate that of the former to a fair extent’. Thus, the stage is set for a narrowing of the horizon regarding how the Qur’an represents its own genesis. A final observation to be made, and this might be thought of as a corollary to the last point, is that the relationship of tanzïl and wahy and their cognate verbal forms to other key Qur’anic terms, such as al-kitãb (the Scripture) or al-qur'ãn (the recitation), is often left without recourse to any explanation.

At this point it is worth mentioning that the roots n-z-l and w-h-y are not the only roots in the Qur’an that describe the phenomenon of its origin and appearance. For example, on rare occasions ‘the Scripture’ is said to have been ‘cast’ to the Messenger (yulqã ilayka ’l-kitãbu, Q 28:86), a ‘portion of the text’ (süra) is ‘ordained’ or ‘apportioned’ by God (farahnãhã) in Q 24:1, and ‘the recitation’ (al-qur'ãn) is said to have been ‘recited’ or ‘divided’ by God (rattalnãhu, Q 25:32). Such cases are extremely rare and are clearly not a core component of the way the Qur’an conceives of its modality of revelation. As such, it is legitimate in my view to focus on the roots n-z-l and w-h-y when discussing how the Qur’an conceives the mode of its own genesis. It is interesting to note, nonetheless, that the different terms are unlikely to represent cases of synonymity.

My intention in the following chapters is to set aside as much as possible the prior judgments about the relationship between the roots n-z-l and w-h-y and ‘revelation’ and attempt to judge them on their own terms through a rigorous philological investigation of the Qur’anic text. The work begins by exploring the semantic ranges of the two roots in order to show that, on the one hand, the spatial aspect of the root n-z-l is key to understanding one of the ways that the Qur’an presents its own genesis, although this is not tantamount to its disclosure, while on the other, the root w-h-y represents, in the main, God’s communication to prophets. Thus, the case is made through a sustained analysis of the relevant verses that the roots n-z-l and w-h-y represent two separate processes in the Qur’anic concept of revelation. I will then take a step back from such close readings and offer a high-level perspective by demonstrating that the roots n-z-l and w-h-y are concentrated in particular chronological periods and literary contexts, and that these findings affirm the central premises of the earlier semantic observations. Moving away from semantic and conceptual observations towards rhetorical ones, a detailed discussion unfolds on the chronological and literary distribution of the two roots, which demonstrates how the concepts are used to convince the audience of the authenticity of the revelatory message and the Messenger; an observation that has ramifications for understanding the dynamic nature of the Qur'an's self-referentiality. The final chapter defines 'revelation' from a Qur'anic perspective before considering the implications of the findings from a wider perspective.

Overall Approach of the Study

Before beginning the subject proper, it remains to detail the overall approach adopted in this study and any presumptions that may affect the reading of the text. The first and most important presumption is that I take the Qur'an to be a product of 7th century Arabia, which contains the record of the addresses of the Qur'anic Messenger to his audience, and is therefore the earliest example of Islamic literature. While this was self-evident to earlier scholars of Islam, this premise was brought into serious doubt in the wake of the publication of John Wansbrough's seminal studies Quranic Studies (1977) and The Sectarian Milieu (1978). For Wansbrough, the profound reworking of Biblical materials in the Qur'an was less an indication of the syncretistic environment of late antique Arabia, but rather evidence that the Qur'an was little more than prophetic sayings derived from various sources, which were compiled by an anonymous group of redactors outside of Arabia—possibly located anywhere in the Near East. The process of canonisation, Wansbrough maintained, was so gradual that it would not be possible to speak of a fixed version of the Qur'anic text until after 800 ce.

Despite the unquestionable contribution that Wansbrough's studies have made to Qur'anic studies, including making it abundantly clear that the Islamic sources must be approached critically, his central thesis is largely rejected. The valuable 'revisionist scholarship' that followed—as typified by the works of Patricia Crone, Michael Cook, Gerald Hawting and Andrew Rippin—gave rise to a renewed critical evaluation of the traditional narratives of Islamic origins. While this is not the place to critique Wansbrough's theory in detail, it is worth noting that recent scholarship by, among others, Andreas Görke and Gregor Schoeler, has convincingly shown that the broad outline of Islamic origins as presented in the sira literature—which need only include the basic data of the lifetime of the Prophet, the location of his activity, the hijra and the community's cohabitation with Jewish groups, and its engagement in military activities in Medina and Mecca—can be accepted as historical. This is not to advocate a return to the days of un-critical reliance upon the traditional narrative of Islamic origins or to read the Qur'an in light of the sira. Rather, it is to acknowledge that to fully understand and interpret the Qur'anic text one must be able to place it within a certain place and time—and to do this, one need only accept the most sparing of details contained in the sira.

As for the dating of the text itself, both material evidence and recent scholarship have shown that an early codification of the received standard rasm, that is, the consonantal structure of the text, is increasingly likely. This is not, however, unanimously accepted. Several studies have rejected the traditional Islamic dating of the unification of the various Qur'anic traditions into a single codex (muhhaf) at the time of the third caliph, `Uthmãn b. `Affãn (r. 23/644– 34/655), and instead argued that the Qur'an only existed as a codex from the time of the Umayyad caliph `Abd al-Malik b. Marwãn (r. 65/685–86/705). The various types of literary and material evidence that support this hypothesis have also been shown to be in concordance with the traditional dating, while there are no features of the Qur'anic text that suggest that it remained fluid into the eighth century—for example, there are no references to the major developments in Islamic history during the period from 630–700. In addition to this, Islamic tradition unanimously credits `Uthmãn with producing the codex, and many of the specific traditions that detail these events have been shown to be dateable to the 1st century of Islam.

Perhaps the most significant evidence for supporting a mid-seventh century dating of the Qur'anic text are the manuscripts that have been radiocarbon dated to this time or earlier. Some of the Qur'an folios found in the Great Mosque at han`ãh in 1972, which represent large portions of the text, are consistently being radiocarbon dated to before

660 ce. Other manuscripts, including a fragment recently discovered at Birmingham University that has been dated between 568 and 645 ce, are also being dated to before the mid-7th century. Although carbon dating has occasionally produced anomalous results, as well dating only the parchment itself and not necessarily when it was used, it appears that the Qur'anic text—albeit with some minor variants— was extant from the 650s and codified no later than `Uthmãn's reign.

It should be noted that despite the early codification of the received consonantal text as we have it today in the time of `Uthmãn, this does not preclude the possibility that some individual verses may have been modified, changed, or even omitted from the Qur'an over the course of the twenty years (or possibly sixty years if following the `Abd al-Malik dating) following the death of the Qur'anic Messenger. This, one might say, is a period of history that may never be fully brought to light. Moreover, because of the orthography of the early Arabic script a fixed rasm does not necessarily entail a text with no variants. The opposite is the case as such variants ultimately formed the seven authoritative 'readings' (qirãhãt) of the Qur'an. Many of these variants are, however, concerned with phonetics as opposed to meaning and so do not represent textual variants in a strict sense.

Therefore, it is fair to say that the Qur'anic text was likely codified by the midseventh century, notwithstanding some textual variation between this and the non-`Uthmãnic recensions, as well as the seven canonical readings. The most widely printed and recited Qur'anic reading of the standard rasm today, that of hafs han `Ãhim, is employed as the base text in this work.

The second presumption is that the Qur'anic text can plausibly be arranged into a chronological order and that Theodore Nöldeke's schematic is the most convincing and valid in broad outlines. A detailed comparison of the traditional Muslim accounts and the attempts by Western scholars such as those of Weil, Nöldeke, Blachère, and Bell is hardly possible here. It is sufficient to state that I accept the approach adopted by Nöldeke to dating the suras, which showed that the Qur'anic text consists of textual clusters—united by such diverse internal criteria as verse length, overall text length, rhyme profiles, introductory formulae, literary structure, terminology and vocabulary usage— and that these are best explained as indicative of chronological stages of development.68 Several recent studies with a range of different textual criteria have converged with Nöldeke's chronology; such as that increased verse length coincides with independent lexical markers. While Nöldeke posited a chronological order of suras within each of the four periods that he identified—early, middle, and late Meccan, and Medinan—in the diachronic part of this study, only the chronological periods themselves are utilised. There is no reference to the chronological order of the suras within each period as Nöldeke's chronology cannot be relied upon when it comes to the detailed order of the suras given the complexities and, possibly, impossibilities of creating such a chronology of the suras themselves.

Nöldeke has been critisised for basing his chronology on entire suras when other scholars such as Richard Bell, Montgomery Watt and Alford T. Welch have argued that the original unit of revelation was much smaller. Although the position that the sura was the original compositional unit remains controversial, a plethora of recent scholarship has shown the underlying literary unity in many suras, particularly those of the Meccan period and, increasingly, the Medinan period too. This does not rule out that additions may have been made to texts at a later date—this is clearly the case in a number of instances as Nöldeke himself identified—but it does mean that if a scholar claims that a text is not a genetic unity, this needs to be supported by significant textual evidence, as Nicolai Sinai has maintained. For the purposes of this investigation the view I have adopted is one of 'default holism', that is, that the sura is considered whole unless proven otherwise. This issue, however, does not have a large effect on the study because the number of verses that include the roots n-z-l or w-h-y and which have been considered additions by Nöldeke is very limited. To a large extent the question of the unity of the sura can therefore be bracketed.

It has already been indicated that the broad outline of the sira is accepted, albeit with considerable caution. This statement does not entail that the Qur'an is read with recourse to either the sira or traditional Islamic exegesis in this study. Quite the contrary: the reading is based solely on the Qur'anic text itself and what can be gleaned from a careful and 'slow' reading of the text. There are minimal references to the broad outline of the sira narrative, but this is not a study that treats the Qur'an and its exegesis as a single subject. Rather, the objective is to read the Qur'an in a robust literary and historical-critical manner and to allow the Qur'an to speak for itself, in its own terms. Here, I am reminded of a statement offered by Sidney Griffith:

Hermeneutically speaking, one should approach the Qur'ãn as an integral discourse in its own right; it proclaims, judges, praises, blames from its own narrative center. It addresses an audience which is already familiar with oral versions in Arabic of earlier scriptures and folklores. The Qur'ãn does not borrow from, or often even quote from these earlier texts. Rather, it alludes to and evokes their stories, even sometimes their wording for its own rhetorical purposes. The Arabic Qur'ãn, from a literary perspective, is something new.

The above quotation brings us to another methodological principle of this study. In order to do justice to the complex of ideas, or the 'integral discourse' as Griffith puts it above, relating to revelation in the Qur'an, the principal object of study will be the Qur'anic text itself and not its intersection with other relevant, mostly Biblical, texts. In other words, the study is largely, although not exclusively, intratextual as opposed to intertextual. This is not to say that I am discounting ideas of revelation from other contexts, as these are considered at various times throughout the work, but it is to say that the ideas inherent in the text must be viewed from within their particular Qur'anic context. As Daniel Madigan has rightly pointed out, it is the task of the interpreter to read from the Qur'an and not into the Qur'an what he might have learned from other scriptures. Moreover, such a focus on the text itself, as would be customary in Biblical studies, might also be seen as a counterbalance to the prevalence of 'source' studies, that is, studies which focus on texts outside the Qur'an, as opposed to a literary analysis of the Qur'an itself.

An exception to the above statement is the corpus of pre-Islamic poetry, which is clearly in both time and space the closest to the Qur'anic text. While some of the material that is purported to represent pre-Islamic poetry is undoubtedly later forgeries, it is equally true that much of the material is authentic. This material represents an important and immediate background to the Qur'anic text. My use of this corpus is primarily philological to understand the original settings and therefore meanings of Arabic words, as is particularly evident in the treatment of the root w-h-y.

A final caveat is in order. As readers progress through the book, they will no doubt recognise that certain aspects accord with the traditional Islamic understanding of revelation, broadly construed. On the one hand, the notion that the Qur'an exists in its entirety in the celestial realm and then passages are delivered to the Qur'anic Messenger over time is common to both interpretations. On the other hand, the reading offered in this study on how such passages are delivered to the Messenger is at considerable variance with traditional understandings. As has just been explained, the reading presented is based upon the Qur'anic text itself and does not, as a methodological principle, consider its reception history. Nonetheless, I do offer some brief reflections on the relationship of this work to Islamic tradition at the end of the book. <>

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 tahawwuf 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 khalïfa 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 tahawwuf 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 awliyãh 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 malfüzãt and the tazkirãt. 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 tharïqa-based Sufism which increasingly got trapped in highly ritualised performances in the garb of right conduct (ãdãb). 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'ãn as a verse about women's subordination is not re-examined as a distortion of the message of the Qur'ãn 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 Qurhãn 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 adãb 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 (mizãj): Sufiãna, simple, soft, humble, and subdued; and sauqyiãna, commonplace or loud, almost vulgar. Thus, a Sufiãna mizãj person would eat moderately, converse softly, and avoid flamboyant behaviour. On the contrary, a sauqyiãna mizãj 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`ãwïz (protection amulet) from the shrine of his pïr, Hhahrat Miãh Mastãn Shãh. 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 Bï Mayya, a mystic who is believed to have arrived in Rampur along with the earliest migrants from Buner, Swat. 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 nazrãna at the ziyãrat. 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 Bï 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” 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. 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, modernday tazkira of awliyã' Allah. I feel honoured to present stories of women awliyã' 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 tahawwuf, 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 tharïqas with their Shaikh-created rules, tahawwuf 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 khãnqãhs 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 khãnqãhs and their presence at the male Sufi khãnqãhs. Chapter 8 examines controversies about shrine visitation. This chapter symptomizes the everlasting glory of Sufi darbãrs and ziyãrats 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 Khalïfas; one Sufi woman who held spiritual sessions for women; five Sufi women who performed baihat 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 khãnqah; 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 Tawãrïkh ãhïna-yi tahawwuf, an 1893 hagiography of the Shãbirï 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. <>

THE EUDAIMONIST ETHICS OF AL-FĀRĀBĪ AND AVICENNA by Janne Mattila [Series: Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science. Texts and Studies, Brill, 9789004506473] Now available in Open Access thanks to the support of the University of Helsinki.

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

Abü Nahr al-Fãrãbï (d. 950/1) and Abü hAlï al-husayn Ibn Sïnã (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. 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-Fãrãbï was a significant influence on Andalusian philosophers, notably Ibn Bãjja (d. 1139), Averroes (Ibn Rushd; d. 1198), and Maimonides (Ibn Maymün; 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-Fãrãbï 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 (kalãm), 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-Kindï (d. after 870) and Abü Bakr al-Rãzï (d. 925),3 than the more traditionally structured virtue ethics. Consequently, there are no detailed studies on the ethical thought of even the most wellknown philosophers, such as the trio of al-Fãrãbï, 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-Fãrãbï and Avicenna,4 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-Fãrãbï 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-Fãrãbï 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-Fãrãbï 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 (Tahdhïb al-akhlãq). 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-Fãrãbï 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-Fãrãbï, 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-Fãrãbï 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-Fãrãbï 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-Fãrãbï 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-Fãrãbï'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-Fãrãbï 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.

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Conception of Ethics

Before proceeding to the study of the ethical thought of al-Fãrãbï 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.55 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-Kindï, in On the Quantity of Aristotle's Books (FïkammiyyatkutubArishühãlïs), 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-Fãrãbï and Avicenna share this general view about the position of practical philosophy as the crowning part of the philosophical curriculum. the "human science" (al-hilm al-insãnï) or political science in the latter. This science differs from all parts of theoretical philosophy in that it is concerned with human voluntary (irãdï) 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-Fãrãbï 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-Fãrãbï'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-Fãrãbï 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-ihtiqãd al-yaqïnï) concerning the existents that are independent of human actions, whereas the aim of the latter is to attain "sound opinions" 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, Al-Fãrãbï presents his most complete account of the contents and order of the philosophical sciences in his curricular works, in particular, the Enumeration of Sciences (Ihhãh al-hulüm), but also in the first section of the Attainment of Happiness (Kitãb Tahhïl al-sahãda). In these treatises, the final part of philosophy is called the "political science" (al-hilm al-madanï) in the former and he defines ethics, in particular, as knowledge concerning the character traits (akhlãq) and actions that lead to happiness in this life and the next, where Aristotle's Ethics constitutes the authoritative work. In sum, al-Fãrãbï 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-Fãrãbï 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-Fãrãbï, 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`ãd), also dealing with the nature of worldly and otherworldly happiness, among the applied parts ( furü`) 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-Fãrãbï, 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 (Fuhül 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-Fãrãbï 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 (Fïmabãdi' ãrã' ahl al-madïna al-fãhila), Political Governance (al-Siyãsa al-madaniyya), and the Book of Religion (Kitãb 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.69 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-Shifã') and the Pointers and Reminders (al-Ishãrãt wa-l-tanbïhãt). The corresponding section of the Beginning and Return (al-Mabda'wa-l-ma`ãd) 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 (Risãlat al-Birr wa-l-ithm), the Science of Ethics (Risãlafï `ilm al-akhlãq), and the Covenant (Risãlafïal-`ahd), that possibly have their origin in amore extensive book on practical philosophy that is now lost. Many other epistles, such as the Treatise on Love (Risãlafïal-`ishq) and the Epistle of the Present (Risãla fï al-tuhfa), also complement the picture of his ethical views, while the Treatise of Immolation on the Afterlife (al-Risãla al-ahhawiyya fï al-ma`ãd) is important for the eschatological aspect of happiness. As a result, for both al-Fãrãbï 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. <>

Overlapping Cosmologies in Asia: Transcultural and Interdisciplinary Approaches edited by Bill M. Mak and Eric Huntington [Series: Crossroads - History of Interactions across the Silk Routes, Brill, 9789004511415]

The history of cosmology is often understood in terms of the development of modern science, but Asian cosmological thought and practice touched on many aspects of life, including mathematics, astronomy, politics, philosophy, religion, and art.

Because of the deep pervasion of cosmology in culture, many opportunities arose for transmissions of cosmological ideas across borders and innovations of knowledge and application in new contexts. Taking a wider view, one finds that cosmological ideas traveled widely and intermingled freely, being frequently reinterpreted by scholars, ritualists, and artists and transforming as they overlapped with ideas and practices from other traditions.

This book brings together ten diverse scholars to present their views on these overlapping cosmologies in Asia. They are Ryuji Hiraoka, Satomi Hiyama, Eric Huntington, Yoichi Isahaya, Catherine Jami, Bill M. Mak, D. Max Moerman, Adrian C. Pirtea, John Steele, and Dror Weil.

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What is Cosmology?

Ask a selection of modern scholars of cosmology about the subjects of their research and you will receive surprisingly diverse responses. Contemporary cosmologists as such generally study the origins and workings of the universe as we have come to know it only recently, originating with the Big Bang and filled with distant objects and energies that are imperceptible without the most advanced instruments. Historians, in turn, may focus on older forms of astral science that interpret the visible planets and stars, scholars of religion may read texts that describe mythological mountains at the center of the universe, and art historians may characterize architectural structures that mimic cosmogonic processes. The objects that belong to the modern study of cosmology and its history seemingly range from the grandest features of the knowable universe to the most personal human creations.

Complicating the definition of cosmology further, not all languages and cultures divide realms of knowledge in the same way. Ancient texts sometimes combine into a single discourse topics that would now be strictly divided into separate fields of cosmology, astronomy, geography, biology, physics, and philosophy. For example, Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakoša describes the characteristics of living beings as intimately connected to the natures of different cosmological realms through dynamic physical and causal processes. Conversely, traditional systems may also distinguish topics that modern scientists might consider related. For example, some ancient Chinese authors considered the general observation of celestial phenomena (tianwen, heavenly pattern) to be a different discipline than the precise computation of celestial motion (li, astronomical system/ephemeris/calendar).

In seeking to understand cosmology across periods of history, regions of the world, and different academic disciplines, then, one must begin by looking broadly enough to be inclusive but also precisely enough to support productive analyses. At a very basic level, the English word "cosmology" ultimately originates in the Greek (world) and (discourse), referring to topics of understanding the world that attracted diverse opinions not only among the ancient Greeks but also elsewhere in the ancient world. Indeed, impulses to understand the world, and especially humanity's place within it, seem to occur in some of the earliest surviving documents from ancient cultures. The three-thousand-year-old Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh tells the story of a man from civilization and a man from the wilderness, with the character of each determined by their place of origin.5 The similarly ancient Indic hg Veda divides the world into four cardinal directions and three horizontal layers, with the creation of the world sometimes characterized as an act of measurement and compared to the process of building a house. Perhaps as an indication of the centrality of cosmology to human experience, similar writings on humanity, nature, and the world seem to remain relevant even in the present day. One need only compare these millennia-old texts to more recent works, such as Henry David Thoreau's Walden or Stephen Hawking's A Brief History of Time, to see that such investigations continue to be compelling to large and diverse audiences. The desire to understand our world is early, longstanding, and widespread.

Given the centrality of such thinking to human experience, it is perhaps not surprising that some key features of cosmology appear almost universally in traditions across the globe. The sun is a focal point of theorization and worship in regions from ancient Greece and Egypt to India, Japan, and South America, despite the vast separations and differences in histories between these various places. Other elements that are widely recognized as important in human existence, like the moon, water, and earth, also frequently become crucial aspects of cosmological thinking and narratives across cultures. Among these, celestial phenomena have often been a focus of special attention not just because they are experienced so widely but also because some so remarkably align to patterns of human activity while others remain provocatively inscrutable. On the one hand, phenomena like solstices and equinoxes clearly connect to the changes of the seasons and therefore agricultural cycles and other aspects of human life. In Egypt, the reappearance of the star Sirius in late summer was identified with the all-important annual flooding of the Nile as early as 3000 bce. The ability to mark and predict such events provided unquestionable utility in the ancient world, and cultures that tended to deify important natural phenomena often saw gods in the features of the sky (in Egypt, Sirius was identified with the goddess Isis). On the other hand, celestial events like eclipses and the appearance of comets have less obvious relationships with human activity but seem no less worthy of explanation. In some Indian traditions, eclipses were understood as the devouring of the sun or moon by the demon Rãhu, with the particular direction at which the shadow enters the disc of the sun or moon portending disaster for specific groups of people. Because the features of the sky can be both mechanically predictable and unaccountably mysterious, the study of astral science has understandably become a focal point of many kinds of cosmological inquiry across human history.

At the same time, one also quickly sees that different people from diverse regions have developed wildly varying explanations of the world, often for reasons specific to their geography or culture. Several traditions of South Asia describe the inhabited world as essentially a mass of land surrounded by great oceans, just as the Indian subcontinent is a peninsula, while the people of ancient Egypt saw their cosmos as divided into two banks across the fertile Nile river and surrounded mostly by desert and mountains.9 Because each model purports to capture the structure of the known or knowable universe, they are influenced by local geography, agriculture, and trade. Other differences in cosmology relate more to philosophical or religious factors. To the ancient Chinese, correlative thinking across different aspects of the cosmos prompted explanations in terms of abstract structures of political hierarchy, theories of yin and yang, and the five phases (wuxing). An alternative Buddhist view divides the world into three vertically stacked realms that correlate to specific psychological, ethical, and meditative states, modeling a path to enlightenment.

Historical Approaches to Cosmology and Cosmologies

Tackling such breadth and complexity across cultures, modern historians of cosmology have adopted a variety of approaches. On the one hand, many have favored description, working to thoroughly explain single traditions by becoming immersed in single cultural or linguistic domains, mathematical systems, or textual or artistic sources. This research is unquestionably foundational, but because it requires such high degrees of specialization, it sometimes problematically creates artificial divisions of topics based on differences in the languages, cultural knowledge, or techniques necessary to understand these different expressions. In the field of Buddhist studies, for example, it has often been assumed that certain Chinese and Indian traditions must diverge simply because of their distinct cultural and linguistic contexts, despite the fact that they have common forebears and features, and without critically examining how this supposed divergence affects contemporary theorization or relates to historical realities. Following such an essentialist division by broad cultural and linguistic groups, a typical global survey of cosmology in history divides topics into supposedly distinct regional cosmologies, with separate chapters on Babylon, Egypt, India, Scandinavia, Mesoamerica, and so on, even though it might also instructively be organized by types of calendrical cycles, notions of sacred mountains and waters, or specific applications of technology.

On the other hand, focusing on the clear commonalities and differences between such cosmologies, other historians have adopted more comparative approaches. One frequent goal of comparison has been to trace the origins and dissemination of persistent or influential ideas, especially with a teleological eye toward the development of modern science from ancient traditions. Such approaches were especially popular among the encyclopedists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including Louis-Pierre-Eugène Sédillot, Moritz Cantor, and George Sarton, whose Introduction to the History of Science was among the most ambitious works in its field. Revising the Hellenocentrism of earlier scholars, Otto Neugebauer later convincingly demonstrated the indebtedness of Greek astronomers to their Egyptian and Babylonian predecessors.14 Indeed, many Egyptian and Babylonian astronomical conventions remain with us even to the present day, such as the twenty-four hour clock and sexagesimal units of measurement, revealing a continuous dissemination and development of ideas over the past three millennia and across significant linguistic and cultural boundaries.

The comparativist tendency to see cosmologies in terms of origins, transmissions, and the eventual development of modern science, while clearly productive, also tends to further encourage the view that cosmologies are essentially independent systems associated with particular cultural groups or individuals. When contact between these putative monoliths occurs, it is often assumed that one must take priority over the other, either in terms of chronology (being earlier) or in terms of scientific accuracy (being more effective), thus allowing scholars to propose decisive conflicts and linear models of transmission between supposedly disparate traditions. This almost Kuhnian analysis often precludes other ways of thinking, despite the fact that the history of cosmology is not limited to the history of science. In recent decades, historians of science have noted this problem well, especially Nathan Sivin, who proposed the concept of cultural manifolds as part of a multidimensional approach to research on ancient science. As he argued, the development of a body of knowledge such as cosmology is often driven by factors extrinsic to the knowledge itself, including political, bureaucratic, and personal ones. Consequently, statements asserting that modern astronomy is fundamentally Babylonian in origin or that religious cosmologies have been rejected in favor of more convincing observational science are deeply problematic, since the real histories are usually not teleological and depend on a variety of complex factors.

The traditional teleological interest in the development of modern science has also led to emphasis on Mediterranean and European traditions, such as Hellenic-Judaic-Christian cosmologies and Arabic astronomies, even though Asian cosmologies have been equally impactful on cultures both in the past and in the present, not to mention their diversity and richness in their own right. When Asian cosmologies do take primary focus, analyses often rely on Western categories and models of progress. David Pingree and Joseph Needham, for example, used comparative approaches to detail cosmological and astral traditions in India and China, respectively. Particularly in the case of Needham, these efforts were often driven by a positivist agenda, giving disproportionate importance to matters that appealed to modern scientific sentiments even while affirming the value of non-Western traditions.

Such focus on origins and accuracy also poses other difficulties, since both characteristics imply judgements of value and therefore incite nationalistic controversy. Some Indian, Chinese, and Japanese scholars, for example, have vigorously debated the possibilities of foreign-origin versus native-origin of their knowledge, and foreign scholars also weigh in on these issues. Of course, the tendency to view history in relation to modern political boundaries is inherently problematic and tends to efface many different kinds of social identity, cultural interaction, and historical change.

Recognition of this complexity has been one factor in helping scholars turn away from approaches to history built around nation-based cultural identities.

As attention to questions of primacy have similarly subsided, scholars have more widely recognized that premodern cosmologies were not just abstract systems that occasionally met in brief moments of competition. In fact, many ancient cultures, especially those across Asia, were in continuous contact throughout the longue durée of history. It has become clear that, at any given moment in any particular region, there likely existed multiple bodies of cosmological knowledge and practice interacting with each other in myriad ways. Foreign ideas or new indigenous interpretations were regularly introduced and engaged in ongoing processes of negotiation with tradition, resulting in widely varying patterns of appropriation, conservation, and transformation. Many apparently stable cornerstones of cosmology actually never stopped evolving, as they were continually reengaged and reinterpreted by endless networks of individuals over time. Other cosmological forms seem almost to have fossilized, becoming markers of tradition or regional difference maintained without critique as novel models and practices developed around them.

With such diversity in mind, one alternative to viewing cosmologies as monolithic systems becomes to focus especially on particulars: individual thinkers, texts, artworks, ideas, transmissions, and other forms of evidence that provide snapshots of cosmological thinking or historical processes in their own contexts. With this approach, a cosmology is not a coherent and broadly applicable system of ideas; rather it may be an individualized expression of a singular agenda in one specific text, artwork, or other form. In this way, one may productively contrast the cosmologies of Vasubandhu and Buddhaghosa, two contemporary Buddhist thinkers who describe nearly identical models of the world, but do so for entirely disparate purposes in different contexts. The absolutist position that there is some single abstract or rational system that unites such diverse artifacts becomes untenable.

At the same time as one looks to particulars instead of absolutes, however, the opposite problem arises: relativism. If every instance of cosmology is its own unique and fascinating expression, how can one weigh them against each other to characterize larger historical processes of innovation, stabilization, transmission, or change? Not every expression of cosmology is equal, and one must be able to explain as a matter of history not only why Einstein's theories advance on Newton's but also why traditional cosmologies of Buddhism or Daoism remain central to ethics and ritual even as religious leaders and practitioners agree that they are disproven by modern science.

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, different academic disciplines have grappled with these problems of absolutism, relativism, and finding the in-between in their own ways. Historians of science articulated the need for a middle ground decades ago, and historians of religion and art have similarly moved through phases of Structuralism, Post-modernism, and beyond. This book seeks, in part, to find new ways of thinking about this balance between absolutism and relativism by extending the discussion beyond any single field to look more generally across disciplines. By identifying values besides rationality and progress (in the history of science) or ritualism and symbolism (in the history of religions), new ways of thinking about the nature of cosmologies and their positions in history can emerge. As an edited volume, this book emphasizes finding diverse views from experts in different fields who may define cosmologies and their interactions quite differently. A cosmology may be changed simply by being expressed in a different form (see the chapter by Isahaya), or it may be defended against an opposing cosmology using the techniques of its competitor (Moerman). New cosmological knowledge may be adopted not as part of a coherent system but only slowly and piecemeal (Mak and Jami), or it may be accepted only to be interpreted in a radically different way (Pirtea). Seemingly contradictory systems may even exist unproblematically alongside each other and be used to express each other (Hiraoka and Huntington).

Overlapping Cosmologies

The picture that begins to emerge is one of multiple kinds of cosmologies, from abstract systems of ideas to singular expressions or practices, that relate to each other in widely varying ways, from contradiction and competition to adaptation, assimilation, translation, conflation, reinterpretation, and conservation. Even in a single time and place or a single text by a single author, one does not necessarily find the monolithic systems of isolated traditions, representing either historical culs-de-sac or teleological connections to more progressive ideas. Rather, there are widely varied bodies of cosmological knowledge and practice that have been continually reinterpreted and renewed by each person or community who has brought their own assumptions and skills to bear. As traders traveled between distant regions, intellectuals interpreted texts, or itinerant artists moved from community to community, cosmological ideas, expressions, and practices continually overlapped and transformed in myriad ways.

With this new picture of Asian cosmologies as complex and overlapping, a whole variety of new questions about the history of knowledge becomes possible. Instead of simply asking which group knew something first, more accurately, or more influentially, one can more broadly and deeply interrogate the variety of interactions that can occur when different ideas and practices meet in particular historical moments. What kinds of factors other than accuracy were considered by particular historical agents in deciding whether to adopt or reject a novel or foreign idea? Who were the mediators of knowledge, and did these people see themselves as such? Were changes in practice necessarily accompanied by changes in paradigm? How did the bodies of knowledge and practice of different kinds of people (scholars, artists, bureaucrats) interact with others? What were the roles of particular social groups, especially minorities, in preserving, destroying, developing, or communicating cosmologies?

Recent scholarship has started to address some of these issues, most notably in relation to the introduction of Western scientific cosmology to different Asian traditions, a process that often took decades or centuries and involved vigorous debates between various individuals readily identifiable in the historical record.25 The wealth of available archival materials has provided a highly nuanced picture of cultural interactions in this relatively recent turn of events, but because the end result of these exchanges has often been the eventual acceptance of Western science, even this relatively refined story may sometimes amount to little more than a slower kind of scientific revolution, one measured not in terms of paradigm shifts but rather in terms of specific actors and intermediate processes of hybridization, adaptation, and interpretation.

In reality, even more varied encounters of cosmologies have occurred in numerous ways throughout history. Asian traditions were richly complicated, circulating and developing in dynamic, multilayered, and multidirectional interactions over time. Persian astronomers sought and read texts of their counterparts thousands of miles away (Isahaya), artists in Central Asia intermixed the cosmic mythologies of groups that met along transcontinental trade routes (Hiyama), minority Muslim communities influenced cosmological knowledge at the Ming and Qing courts (Weil), and the interpretation of such histories by modern scholars has been influenced by factors completely outside of Asia (Steele). As more and more complex interplay between traditions comes to light, it becomes increasingly difficult even to provisionally apply the traditional cultural, linguistic, and geographic names (such as “Chinese,” “Persian,” “Indian,” and “Japanese”), let alone reify such distinctions as historical realities. For the sake of clarity, however, this volume does allow the use of such terms at each author’s discretion and definition, whether it be to capture a specific geographic region, language of discourse, or cultural complex. Such labels will continue to remain useful in the service of individual arguments and histories, even as their varied usage across this volume begins to deconstruct them and show the possibility of other forms of conceptualization.

Indeed, the convergence of these discussions highlights another form of cosmological overlap that is key to this book, the coincidence and multiplication of ideas and practices not just in historical contexts but also across modern academic disciplines. In the historical sense, one may speak of overlapping cosmologies in terms ranging from the competition of scientific paradigms to the uncritical incorporation of mathematical techniques or artistic motifs. In the modern academic sense, one may consider how the slow adoption of foreign astral sciences in China (Mak) might provide insights into the hybridization of mythic and artistic cosmologies at Mogao (Hiyama). While these two examples have few cosmological concepts or practices in common, such comparisons can lead to insights into historical processes of adoption, adaptation, and hybridization that extend beyond the histories of either science or art.

It is hoped that the case studies selected for this volume, each expressing a different perspective on overlapping cosmologies, will help lay a groundwork for more significant theorization and study in the future. While subtler than the radical changes of scientific revolution, the processes described in the following pages are no less profound for understanding the history of cosmological thinking. The bodies of knowledge of pre-modern Asia were not static and conservative but active sites of interpretation by specific individuals and groups. In other words, cosmology has been a vigorous and dynamic force in Asian intellectual history.

Structure of the Book

In order to highlight cosmology as a dynamic intellectual tradition rather than static bodies of knowledge, this book eschews the normal organization by supposedly monolithic cultural groups or division by historical periods. Rather, given the paradigm of overlapping cosmologies, we ask the questions of what overlapped and how, who the agents were, and what resulted. The chapters of this volume are thus organized thematically to explore: i) varying dynamics of cultural interactions; ii) the importance of agents of interpretation; iii) intersections of mathematical technique; and iv) intersections of religious thought and visual imagery. Instead of presenting an historical overview of cosmology in Asia, then, these articles reveal specific subjects, methodologies, and insights into context that may help the field of cosmological studies grow in new directions. Further, beyond the interdisciplinary approach of the volume itself, several of the authors also use notably interdisciplinary methods, helping to bring the study of cosmology beyond any single field to broadly connect the history of science, religious studies, art history, and more. The result of all this is greater power to explain what a cosmology or cosmologies might be in a given context, the precise ways that cosmologies can overlap and interact, and how the theories and methods of seemingly disparate disciplines may combine to form a picture of history greater than the sum of the parts.

The first section of the book, Transmissions of Knowledge, examines some of the ways that ideas can travel and transform across vast cultural and linguistic boundaries, as well as the importance of perspective in understanding these cultural histories. Its chapters establish a key premise of this volume, that transmissions and overlaps of cosmologies are complex and multivalent, may happen in multiple or unpredictable stages, and must constantly be reexamined from new viewpoints.

Steele's chapter begins the volume with an example of why the continual reinterpretation of history is necessary, not just because of new sources of evidence but also because of changes in the disciplines in which historical questions are posed and answered. Analyzing not only transmissions of knowledge in Asia but also lineages of interpretation in Western scholarship, it focuses on the bases for a mistaken understanding of relationships between ancient Babylonian and Chinese systems. Presenting three case studies of claims of Babylonian influence on Chinese astronomy and astrology, Steele reveals not only the errors in these arguments but more importantly the intellectual milieux that supported these interpretations, demonstrating the necessity of understanding transmissions of knowledge not only in the past but also in modern scholarship.

Mak's chapter continues the story by confronting the paradigm-shift model of cosmological history and showing that a number of Hellenistic astral concepts were repeatedly introduced to East Asia in multiple waves by Syriac Christians, Islamic astronomers, and the Jesuits. Bringing concepts of sexagesimal measurement, planetary weekdays, zodiac signs, and horoscopy in translated texts, these three different versions of Hellenistic astral science all carried unusual features of their own and met very different fates as they were encountered by the Chinese, who ultimately developed their own strategies to accommodate these new concepts. Foreign ideas were rejected in some cases and acculturated in others, thus challenging the idea of Hellenism as a monolithic cultural force that dispersed throughout Eurasia.

While the first section of the book highlights complex relationships between the larger cultural groups that are typically associated with cosmological bodies of knowledge, the second section, Interpretive Communities, draws closer attention to the importance of small groups and individuals as agents of knowledge and change, including not only mainstream scientists and scholars but also religious leaders and members of cultural minorities. Cosmologies can be understood to overlap not only in terms of vast cultures but also in terms of smaller groups with varied statuses and roles inside larger communities.

In a chapter that shows the value of combining histories of religion and science, Pirtea relates mythological stories about eclipses to astronomical concepts of lunar nodes (points in the sky where the paths of the sun and moon intersect, allowing eclipses). Examining accounts of a dragon that swallows the sun and moon to create eclipses, often treated as a kind of pseudo-planet, Pirtea reveals a fascinatingly complex history of the transmission and interpretation of ideas by particular groups for specific goals. Especially focusing on the work of Mani and his followers, Pirtea suggests a highly skilled adaptation of foreign traditions into a particular theological and soteriological system.

In the subsequent chapter on a Jesuit Aristotelean-Ptolemaic cosmology, Hiraoka argues that an author employed Chinese yunqi theory not to obscure the Christian origins of the knowledge but rather to make sense of novel ideas using well-established Chinese intellectual tools, an approach that was inherited and strengthened by subsequent scholars who came to form a community of interpretation. Neither wholesale adoption of foreign ideas nor a compromising syncretism, this account of a group of intellectuals interpreting and commenting on diverse theories reveals a subtler form of intellectual engagement.

Weil's contribution expands beyond a singular community to examine the complex interactions of several different groups in a single historical milieu, focusing on minority Muslims in the Ming and Qing empires. Between the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries, several different kinds of communities were responsible for transmitting and interpreting aspects of Arabo-Persian astral knowledge to various Chinese groups, including the imperial court and literati circles. Here, a special emphasis is placed on a cultural subgroup not only as a source of knowledge but also as part of a complex process of mediation.

The third section of the book, Mathematical Techniques, departs from these historical accounts to take a closer look at technical aspects of cosmology, revealing how the translation of foreign concepts, terms, and practices may itself be seen as a process of negotiation and overlap. Just as entire systems are not adopted in toto, so too must individual ideas and methods be interpreted and adapted to unique local circumstances, transforming in each case.

Isahaya's contribution identifies a rare example of Ptolemaic geometry being used to understand Chinese astronomical concepts in a fourteenth century Persian almanac. While some Western astronomical traditions are traditionally understood in terms of geometric representations of the heavens, Chinese systems are traditionally framed in terms of numerical values and tables. Here, the author al-Nïsãbürï inventively uses the mathematical tools of one system to explain the logic of another. The rarity of this kind of example, rather than minimizing its historical importance, gives some indication of the wide variety of interpretive strategies open to commentators on diverse traditions.

In the following chapter on the Chinese reception of the Euclidean concept of the circle in the seventeenth century, Jami identifies three separate periods of interpretation in which this foreign knowledge is adapted not only with different levels of sophistication but also in relation to different scientific instruments and technical applications. Focusing particularly on cartography and surveying, Jami shows that cosmological enterprises of ordering the world did not only focus on the heavens but also on the earth, a consideration that importantly reappears in the chapters by Huntington and Moerman. Once again, the adoption of foreign ideas is revealed not to be a wholesale and monovalent conversion to a new knowledge system. Rather, each new context and application of ideas is a new kind of overlap, providing further opportunities for adaptation and reformulation.

The final section of the book, Religious Images, reverses the technical focus of the third section to look at the impact of cosmological knowledge on religious and artistic traditions. While some scholars of cosmology focus almost exclusively on a history-of-science perspective, in reality, cosmology has been intimately tied to numerous other aspects of traditional life, everything from the procedures of ritual performances to the architecture of sacred temples. In focusing specifically on visual representations, this section also highlights another important medium for the transmission of knowledge beyond the expected texts and oral communications. Indeed, artistic examples often complement or contradict what is known from texts, providing unique and compelling narratives of cosmological history. This section also reveals how cosmological concepts can carry important meaning beyond providing tools for calculation or astral observation, such as establishing the basis for ritual programs at a specific site.

Moerman's chapter examines conflicts over the introduction of Jesuit cosmology to Edo Japan, focusing especially on the reactions of Buddhists who sought to justify their traditional model of the world that was centered around an enormous mountain called Sumeru. Entsü and his followers created various kinds of hybrid maps and devices that combined European cartography and science with Buddhist cosmology, exemplifying diverse kinds of accommodation, adaptation, and rejection of the new foreign worldview.

Contrasted with this account of conflict between traditional and foreign cosmologies in Japan, Huntington's chapter examines a negotiation between two mutually contradictory systems of cosmology that exist simultaneously in a purely Buddhist context. Recent mural paintings in Bhutan depict side-by-side two opposed cosmological systems, one of abhidharma philosophy and the other of Kãlacakra tantrism. Close examination reveals that these images borrow characteristics from each other in unique kinds of conflation and comingling that could not be represented in textual sources, providing a new way of understanding how cosmologies might be understood to overlap.

Hiyama's contribution similarly examines a combination of multiple cosmological systems, this time at the Silk Road site of Mogao Cave 285 at Dunhuang. In this single place, elements of prototypically Indian and Chinese cosmological imagery were blended in an eclectic but coherent set of murals that represents another unique overlapping of cosmologies in history. While Dunhuang is already well-recognized as a site of significant multi-cultural interaction, specific relationships between cosmological bodies of knowledge must be investigated through rare examples such as this complex and extraordinary cave.

While the chapters of this volume cannot hope to capture the full complexity of interacting cosmological traditions across Asian history, they provide a thematic overview of many of the key issues, methodologies, and sources that are propelling the field into a new generation of scholarship. Looking at visual and religious sources, understanding the shifting interpretations of individual scholars, and identifying influential communities and intra-cultural interactions are all crucial to developing a completer and more nuanced picture of the intellectual history of the many ever-changing and overlapping cosmologies of history. Instead of being defined systematically by monolithic and isolated cultures or even elite individuals, cosmologies were constantly in flux. New or foreign ideas were transmitted, often without the context of an entire cosmological system, and many different kinds of people interpreted and adapted these ideas using their own bases of knowledge and as suited to diverse purposes. The notion of overlapping cosmologies provides a groundwork for ever-growing sophistication in future explorations of the cosmologies of traditional civilizations. <>

MATHEMATICS AND PHYSICS IN CLASSICAL ISLAM: COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES IN THE HISTORY AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE edited by Giovanna Lelli [Series: 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 nineth 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-Khawãrizmï (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) 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.

Hossein 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-Fãrãbï (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: hAlï Muhammad Ihfahãnï 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 Dãr al-Funün, a polytechnic founded by the Qajar dynasty in 1851. Al-Ihfahãnï, 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-Khawãrizmï’s algebra. The latter acts as an empty language in which both arithmetic and geometry can be expressed. The notion of “qiyãs” (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 al-Khawãrizmï, 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 ArabIslamic 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 Muhãbaqa in the Muqaddima of Ibn Khaldün” points out that the materialist historiography of Ibn Khaldün (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 Khaldün, 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. <>

BŪLUṢ IBN RAJĀʾ: THE FATIMID EGYPTIAN CONVERT WHO SHAPED CHRISTIAN VIEWS OF ISLAM by David Bertaina [Series: Arabic Christianity, Brill, 9789004517394]

Būluṣ ibn Rajāʾ (ca. 955–ca. 1020) was a celebrated writer of Coptic Christianity from Fatimid Egypt. Born to an influential Muslim family in Cairo, Ibn Rajāʾ later converted to Christianity and composed The Truthful Exposer (Kitāb al-Wāḍiḥ bi-l-Ḥaqq) outlining his skepticism regarding Islam. His ideas circulated across the Middle East and the Mediterranean in the medieval period, shaping the Christian understanding of the Qurʾan's origins, Muḥammad's life, the practice of Islamic law, and Muslim political history. This book includes a study of Ibn Rajāʾ's life, along with an Arabic edition and English translation of The Truthful Exposer.

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Büluh (Paul) ibn Rajã' was one of the most celebrated writers in Coptic Christianity during the Fatimid era in Egypt (969–1171). According to his biography in the History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria, he was born into a leading Muslim family in Cairo, probably in the late 950s, where he studied with the foremost scholars of the Qur'an and hadith. After converting to Christianity due to a religious experience in the 980s, Ibn Rajã' became a monk and, later, priest in the Egyptian desert, where he wrote during the reign of the Fatimid caliph al-hãkim (996–1021). Notable for his criticism of Islam, Ibn Rajã' earned the nickname of “al-Wãhih,” which means “The Exposer/Clarifier.” He composed The Exposer’s Book in Truth (Kitãb al-Wãhih bi-l-haqq; shortened to The Truthful Exposer) during a general persecution of Copts in Egypt under al-hãkim. This book outlined Ibn Rajã''s skepticism concerning the traditional accounts of the origins of the Qur'an, the prophetic claims about Muhammad, the alleged trustworthiness of oral traditions in the hadith collections, and the legitimacy of Muslim legal theories and practices. Material from Ibn Rajã''s work circulated across the Middle East and the Mediterranean in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. I discovered that his work is the Arabic original for the Latin Liber denudationis, which several scholars have shown contributed to the Latin West’s knowledge of Islam. This transmission process took place mostly in the form of uncredited adaptations, which later Christians integrated into their works. Due to the popularity of Ibn Rajã''s arguments, later authors writing in Latin, Syriac, Greek, and European languages repeated his views (sometimes verbatim). These new authors translated Ibn Rajã''s text and reworked it into their materials – frequently polemical pieces – across medieval Europe. The result is that Büluh ibn Rajã' profoundly shaped western Christian understanding of the Qur'an’s origins, Muhammad’s life, the practice of Islamic law, and Muslim political history. This phenomenon occurred to a lesser extent in the Christian East. His work The Truthful Exposer also advances our knowledge of the Islamic scholarly culture existing in Egypt under the Fatimid caliphate. His work is a remarkable witness to intra-Muslim theological debates, as they would have been experienced by the intellectuals of the Fatimid period at the turn of the eleventh century. Ibn Rajã''s text was instrumental to the process by which Christian Arabic literature integrated and disseminated internal Muslim debates into a new form via Eastern Christian networks across the Mediterranean and Europe.

Büluh ibn Rajã' merits a place among the most important Christian Arabic authors, and among the most important figures in the history of Christian-Muslim encounters. His Arabic work The Truthful Exposer made a wide impact on the Mediterranean world, as

Latin Christians adopted his views to interpret the Qur'an and Islam. Ibn Rajã"s writings have filtered into different cultures, languages, regions, denominations, and religions. Apart from perhaps the ninth-century Letter (Risãla) of hAbd al-Masïh al-Kindï, no other premodern work has had a greater impact on Christian analysis of the Qur'an. Since Ibn Rajãh's name was not attached to later versions of his work, his influence arose through his arguments and not his celebrity status as a Muslim convert to Christianity. The aim of the present analysis is to unite the historical figure with his written Arabic text in order to reveal how his work has shaped the course of Christian perceptions of Islam across the Middle East, the Mediterranean, and Europe up to contemporary times. His life and works are important pieces of knowledge for contemporary scholars of the Christian East and West, as well as for scholars of Islamic intellectual history. <>

THE EMERGENCE OF EARLY SUFI PIETY AND SUNNÏ SCHOLASTICISM: ‘ABDALLÃH B. AL-MUBÃRAK AND THE FORMATION OF SUNNÏ IDENTITY IN THE SECOND ISLAMIC CENTURY by Feryal Salem [Series: Islamic History and Civilization, Brill, ISBN 9789004310292]

In the figure of ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak (118–181/736–797), we find a paragon of the fields of ḥadīth, zuhd, and jihād, as attested to by the large number of references to him in the classical Islamic texts. His superior rank as a ḥadīth transmitter earned him the title "commander of the faithful" in ḥadīth. He contributed to Islamic law at its early phases of development, practiced jihād, composed poetry, and participated in various theological discussions. In addition, Ibn al-Mubārak was a pioneer in writing on piety and was later regarded by many mystics as one of the earliest figures of Sufism. Ibn al-Mubārak's position during the formative period of Islamic thought illustrates the unique evolution of zuhd, ḥadīth, and jihād; these form a junction in the biography of Ibn al-Mubārak in a way that distinctively illuminates the second/eighth-century dynamics of nascent Sunnī identity. Furthermore, Ibn al-Mubārak's status as a fighter and pious figure of the Late Antique period reveals a great deal about the complex relationship between the early Muslim community and the religiously diverse setting which it inhabited. This critical and comprehensive monograph of ʿAbdallāh b. al-Mubārak situates him within the larger context of the social and religious milieu of Late Antiquity. It explores the formation of Sunnī identity in the second Islamic century and demonstrates the way in which it manifested itself through networks of pious scholars who defined, preserved, and passed on what they understood to be normative Islamic practice and beliefs from one generation of Muslim intellectuals to another.

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In `Abdallãh b. al-Mubãrak (118–181/736–797) we find a figure who was considered by many a paragon in the fields of hadïth, zuhd, and jihãd, as attested to by the large number of references to him in classical Islamic sources. His expertise and superior rank as a hadïth transmitter even earned him the title "commander of the faithful" among some later critics.1 He contributed to Islamic law during its early phases of development, performed jihãd, composed poetry, and participated in theological discussions. In addition, Ibn al-Mubãrak was a pioneer in writing on piety and was later regarded by many mystics to be one of the earliest Sufi figures.2 The biography of Ibn al-Mubãrak, who lived during the formative period of Islamic thought, gives us insight into the evolution of zuhd, hadïth, and jihãd; indeed his life and works distinctively illuminate the second/eighth-century dynamics of the nascent Sunnï tradition. Furthermore, Ibn al-Mubãrak's status as a fighter and pious figure of the Late Antique period reveals a great deal about the complex relationship between the early Muslim community and the religiously diverse setting they inhabited. Yet, despite the importance of the figure of `Abdallãh b. al-Mubãrak, to date no comprehensive and critical work has been composed on him in English. Nor has there been a study that situates him within the larger context of Late Antiquity and examines his interactions with the various perceptions of piety and martial valor prevalent in this period. The present study attempts to do these things.

`Abdallãh b. al-Mubãrak's significance to Islamic history is based on several factors. First, Ibn al-Mubãrakhs life reveals the practical application of many aspects of Islamic practice that are often only, or principally, studied from a textual perspective. Many texts deal with zuhd, jihãd, and hadïth on a theoretical level; in the biography of Ibn al-Mubãrak we find a behavioral model of a figure who put these ideals into action. He was a mujãhid, muhaddith (traditionist), and zãhid and achieved prominence among the early Muslim community as a quintessential model in each of these fields. As a result, he is an important figure who not only personifies the developing Sunnï milieu of his time but was also a significant force in shaping early Islamic history and identity. The latter is demonstrated by the overwhelming number of references to him in primary sources which evoke his example.

Second, `Abdallãh b. al-Mubãrak lived during the early formative period of Islamic history, a time in which the schools of law, the field of hadïth sciences, and conceptions of Islamic piety were still developing. In Ibn al-Mubãrak's life we see a living depiction of many aspects of this period and these depictions enable us to better understand the dynamics of the factors involved in shaping the later fields of hadïth and law. A study of this pivotal figure, who participated in and contributed to this formative period of Islam, also sheds light on the formation of Sunnï identity, since hadïth and law were both profound elements of this identity.

Third, `Abdallãh b. al-Mubãrak was a prominent scholar who transmitted hadïth from the most important traditionists of his time. He traveled extensively to collect hadïths, and as a result contributed significantly to the corpus of hadïth collections that were later compiled. The paramount nature of hadïth in the life of this figure is also reflected in the fact that hadïth permeates all of the fields he was involved with, particularly zuhd and jihãd. His compilations on these topics are essentially books of hadïth, though not all prophetic hadïth.3 Furthermore, his Kitãb al-Zuhd and Kitãb al-Jihãd are among the earliest works, if not the earliest works, of their genres.

Ibn al-Mubãrak also played an important role as a mujãhid on the Arab-Byzantine frontiers. His compilation of the Kitãb al-Jihãd is an important contribution to the genre of works on jihãd and his prominence as a figure of piety and scholarship who also participated in jihãd set a precedent that was followed by a significant number of scholars and aspiring scholars. Ibn al-Mubãrak fought the Byzantines when Muslims were still a minority; a study on his life thus raises many questions on the dynamics of the relationship between the three monotheistic faiths during this transformative period. This study of Ibn al-Mubãrak's life as a mujãhid in the frontier lands (thughür) provides further information about the nature of Muslim martial pursuits in early Islamic history.

Finally, Ibn al-Mubãrak is also a crucial figure in early Islamic piety. His Kitãb al-Zuhd is one of the first works in this genre; it was followed by many other kutub al-zuhd composed by other pious figures. His definition of zuhd as a broad spectrum of virtues taught by the Prophet and the early Muslim community laid the foundation on which many later Sufi figures further developed the Sufi tradition. His form of piety, which is often depicted as one that shunned worldliness without shunning the world itself, was a practice that he shared with many other Hadïth transmitters. Because piety was an important criterion in determining the uprightness of a transmitter (hadãla), a study of Ibn al-Mubãrak's piety facilitates a better understanding of the form of piety upheld by the networks of hadïth transmitters. He was praised in primary sources on hadith reference texts and in books of Sufism, in fact the consensus among these sources indicates that his piety was praised by a wide range of his scholarly circle of peers. Since the muhaddithün of Islam's formative period were the bedrock of the then developing

Sunnï identity, a more profound understanding of the vision of piety espoused by these scholars is important because it inevitably influenced later conceptions of what types of devotional practices are considered essential to and within the bounds of Sunnï Islam.

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In examining the scholarly contributions of `Abdallãh b. al-Mubãrak, whose life extended from the end of the Umayyad period to the early decades of `Abbãsid rule, we find a unique window onto the evolution and vision of early Islam during the developing stages of its scholastic tradition. Ibn al-Mubãrak was not only a scholar who was entrenched in the system of the early propagation and production of Islamic knowledge, but he was also a figure who was central to its development and helped shape its direction.

As a major hadïth transmitter who was a pioneer in his advocacy of writing hadïths rather than solely relying on memory for their preservation, Ibn al-Mubãrak became a unique source of a large number of hadïths in the second/eighth century. In addition, his extensive travels gave him access to a vast array of the prominent scholars of his time. In analyzing Ibn al-Mubãrak's teachers and students, we find a sophisticated network of scholars who formed the backbone of the Sunnï scholastic tradition. This is significant in that it portrays the important role hadïth played in defining the ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamã`a, later known as Sunnïs, by the fourth/tenth century. The word "hadïth" in the early period was used loosely to designate not only sayings attributed specifically to the Prophet, but also material attributed to members of the early Muslim community, including Companions, their Followers, and the Followers of these Followers. By analyzing early texts, we find that before the rise of written materials in prose, Islamic knowledge was essentially transmitted in the form of "hadïths" or quotes from an array of early figures deemed as representative of "authentic" Islamic belief. As recent studies in hadïth illustrate, and as I discuss at length, the ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamã`a were the transmitters of this tradition and played a crucial role by choosing which scholars to include in their circles and which to exclude, and by determining which traditions were authoritative.

Recent works in hadïth studies and analyses of prosopographical works have made significant contributions to furthering our understanding of the role of hadïth in shaping the identity of the Sunnïs in the first three Islamic centuries. Rather than a passive group of individuals who were the hleft-over" simple minded common folk (sometimes derogatorily called the hashwiyya) after other sects diverged from the larger Muslim community, a study of the figures in the various habaqãt (generations of scholars) presents a nuanced and sophisticated understanding of the development of Sunnï thought, which was led by a proactive network of figures who validated each other and were a driving force that shaped normative Islamic practice.

The relations of these key scholars and what they understood as normative practice is represented in the life of Ibn al-Mubãrak. For instance, his teacher Ma`mar b. Rãshid was a key link between the generation of hadïth transmitters preceding him and was known as one of the two most prominent students of al-Zuhri. Ma`mar was also an important transmitter of the siyar and maghãzï literature that was transmitted in large part in `Abd al-Razzãq al-han`ãni's Muhannaf.

Similarly, Ibn al-Mubãrak's relationship with Sufyãn al-Thawri was another important link that influenced the transmission of hadïths; furthermore, Sufyãn al-Thawri's conception of piety likely affected Ibn al-Mubãrak's understanding of it in the Kitãb al-Zuhd. Both Sufyãn al-Thawri and Ibn al-Mubãrak were merchants who did not advocate a perspective that regarded the possession of wealth with disdain. Ibn al-Mubãrak also had the unique opportunity to learn from a combination of scholars such as al-Awzã`i, Mãlik, and Abü hanifa. Each of these jurists also represented the development of law in each of the major scholarly hubs of Medina, Syria, and Iraq. In the anecdotes narrating Ibn al-Mubãrak's experiences with these historical figures we find valuable bits of information, such as the skepticism with which the initial phases of Abü hanifa's approach to Islamic law was regarded or the interconnectedness of these scholars and their familiarity with each other's work.

In addition, Ibn al-Mubãrak's students, such as Ibn Ma`in and `Abd al-Rahmãn b. Mahdi, served as a central link between the second/eighth and third/ninth-century scholars, and enabled Ibn al-Mubãrak's influence to continue. Ibn Ma`in was a foundational figure in the field of hadïth criticism and his incorporation of Ibn al-Mubãrak's work into his own ensured the lasting legacy of his teacher. Ibn Ma`in also linked Ibn al-Mubãrak to the most prominent traditionists of the later period, including Muhammad b. Ismã`il al-Bukhãri, Muslim b. al-hajjãj, and Abü Dãwüd al-Sijistãni.

The piety of the figures of this scholarly network that Ibn al-Mubãrak was an essential member of is significant on multiple levels. First, these scholars were known by the masses for their pious conduct, and this is what enabled them to gain access to membership of the Sunni network of scholars. This network differed from a centralized clergy system in which positions are appointed internally. It was by gaining recognition from the masses that the web of Muslim scholars had the authority to endorse or reject individuals into their network. Second, the emphasis on the piety of the hadïth transmitters (as cited by biographical dictionaries, which commonly rejected or criticized traditionists based on their conduct) demonstrates that acceptance as a reliable hadïth transmitter did not lie solely in the sharpness of the intellect of the hadïth transmitter but also depended on additional factors such as moral conduct.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, this network of scholars in turn received their own authority from the support of the common folk who recognized them for their piety and from their colleagues who approved of the validity and accuracy of their transmissions and what they deemed an authentic understanding of prophetic teachings. In this way, the Sunnï scholastic tradition was both static and flexible. It was static in that it maintained a general framework of definitive prohibitions, prescriptions, beliefs, and practices that remained constant and were preserved through what became known as isnãds (chains of transmission) that were attested to by volumes of prosopogrophical works on habaqãt (or generations) of each intellectual link in chains of transmitters. It was dynamic in that many if not the majority of matters related to daily practice could be deliberated and differed upon within this basic framework, which eventually came to be understood as normative Islamic practice, akin to a form of orthodoxy preserved in the form of a normative scholastic tradition.

In addition to Ibn al-Mubarakhs scholarship and its reflection of the formative period of the Sunnï scholastic tradition, we also derive valuable insights into the nature of early Muslim society by examining his martial pursuits. As demonstrated by earlier research, by the second/eighth century when the thughür emerged, pious figures began to spend a period of time there, both fighting and engaging in scholarly pursuits. This pious martial zeal took place on both the Muslim and the Christian side of the frontier. Records in classical sources also portray this perception of martial pursuits in the name of territorial expansion by both Muslims and Christians as a form of piety that was not unique to the second/eighth century, although it appears to have reached a level of sophistication during this timeframe.

By Ibn al-Mubãrak's time the remote areas of the thughür became centers of learning attracting a large number of scholars who taught and studied hadïths while guarding the idle frontlines. Classical sources refer to Fuhayl b. `Iyãh, al-Awzã`ï, and al-Fazãrï spending a period of time guarding the frontlines. The flow of scholars from the east into Syria was also important in that it allowed for the Islamic sciences that were developing in places like Baghdad to penetrate Syria and beyond. In addition, the eastern scholastic trends came to dominate over that of the Syrian scholars. Hence, it is likely that for this reason, the legal schools of scholars such as al-Awzã`ï eventually died out in Syria and were replaced by other modes of thinking from the east.

Like his Kitãb al-Zuhd, Ibn al-Mubãrak's Kitãb al-Jihãd played a prominent role in the field of scholarship on the topic of jihãd. Soon after his work, we find a series of kutub al-jihãd written by various scholars. Notably, Ibn al-Mubãrak's Kitãb al-Jihãd is rich in historical information and reflects how jihãd was used as a means to portray general elements of piety. Thus, the work begins with quotes that emphasize the importance of sincere intentions for God rather than personal gain or ostentation. The anecdotes and sayings from the early community that he includes provide a valuable window on early community hs perception of piety. Furthermore, the relatively chronological ordering of historical references in the book depicts a vision of the practice of jihãd, as it was established during the Prophet's lifetime and the way that it continued until Ibn al-Mubãrak's period.

Ibn al-Mubãrak was also well-known for his position as a proponent of zuhd. In examining his famous work on the topic, we find that the way he and many others who followed him defined zuhd diverges from its lexical definition of asceticism. Zuhd is used as a general term that encompasses a variety of forms of Islamic piety. Ibn al-Mubãrak's Kitãb al-Zuhd is an invaluable resource in defining what the early Muslim community regarded as pious conduct.

A study of Ibn al-Mubãrak's Kitãb al-Zuhd also offers a nuanced perspective of how the early Muslim community viewed wealth and the origins of later Sufi texts that developed from the kutub al-zuhd. We find that rather than zuhd in the second/eighth century being an imitation of Christian monasticism, it was in fact an interpretation of piety that consisted of a diverse variety of forms. Ibn al-Mubãrak was a "rich ascetic" whose interpretation of zuhd involved abstaining from worldliness, but not from the world itself. Similarly, Ibn al-Mubãrak's teacher Sufyãn al-Thawrï, who was another important figure of early piety, was also a wealthy merchant. Ibn al-Mubãrak's Kitãb al-Zuhd devotes little attention to the topic of asceticism and is overwhelmingly dedicated to aspects of pious conduct such as humility and sincerity. This provides us with a unique insight into the attitude that many of the important early Muslim figures had toward the material world. In analyzing other books of zuhd, we find that the practices of piety were varied and demonstrated far less evidence of the indiscriminate adaptation of Christian monastic practices or other non-Muslim influences than had been assumed by some scholars.

We also find an important comparison between the works of Ibn al-Mubãrak's book of zuhd and that of an array of later kutub al-zuhd such as that of Ibn hanbal. Ibn hanbal's Kitãb al-Zuhd openly uses what are known as Isrãhïliyyãt whereas these are conspicuously absent from Ibn al-Mubãrak's book. Given that these traditions were readily available in a place like Syria, where Ibn al-Mubãrak spent an important period of his life, his exclusion of them from his Kitãb al-Zuhd is an interesting observation. If there were elements of exchange and influence between the Judeo-Christian inhabitants of greater Syria, it is also reasonable to think that there might have been a reactionary response to resist outside influence and preserve what were deemed authentic practices. Based on Ibn al-Mubãrakhs attitude towards wealth and the way it stood in stark contrast from that of the Christian monasticism prevalent in greater Syria, it appears that he embodied this perspective of resistance to external influences in the second/eighth Islamic century.

In summary, I have found that a closer examination of how the early Muslim community defined Islamic piety and the sources from which they drew these conceptions challenges some of the assumptions that the appearance of so-called ascetics and later Sufi tarïqas were primarily a result of the influence of the ascetic practices of Christian Syria. While the influence of these trends cannot be completely rejected, a close analysis of the array of early texts on Islamic piety indicates a far more complex amalgam of competing trends of piety. In addition, we also find that the Islamic tradition, like its Judeo-Christian counterparts, also had its own perceptions of piety and spirituality and that many of the concepts of morality and Islamic ethics emerged from within the Islamic tradition itself.

Second, the distinct styles of each of the kutub al-zuhd have an influence on the question of whether these texts were composed by the authors they are attributed to or whether they were composed at a later period and projected onto the second/eighth through fifth/eleventh centuries. In answering this we can make use of Motzki's method, what he refers to as "criteria for authenticity" by an analysis of textual evidence that emphasizes form rather than content. This does not necessarily prove that the contents of the work themselves were authentic sayings of the Prophet but rather that they were genuine attempts to transmit these sayings by the authors that they are attributed to. Similarly, without making an argument as to the accuracy of the quotes in the various kutub al-zuhd, the examination of the textual form of the contents of these books and a comparison among them supports the claim that these were actual works produced by the authors (or in some cases their students) to which they are attributed rather than a later back projection, for which there is not stylistic evidence in its literary form.

Third, the roles of the writers (such as Ibn al-Mubãrak, Wakïh b. al-Jarrãh, and al-Bayhaqï) of many of these books on piety as major hadïth transmitters and essential figures in the network of Sunnï scholarship indicates that their vision of piety was not an offshoot of a “mainstream” form of a more rigid so-called Islamic orthodoxy, but rather that these views of Islamic piety were the very products of the Sunnï Islamic “orthodoxy” which these figures were known to represent.

Finally, the contents of the kutub al-zuhd are quite similar to works that emerged later in Sufi literature, such as the Ihyãh hulüm al-dïn or the Risãlat al-Qushayriyya. These parallels are so significant that the kutub al-zuhd literature may even be categorized as proto-Sufi texts rooted in early Islamic piety. This genre of works (kutub al-zuhd) is a key form of evidence that supports the idea that Sufism emerged and was derived organically from within the Islamic tradition itself rather than its being a later importation. <>

Essay: *Ḥadīth and Sufism in Ethical Discourse: Exploring ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī’s Conception of Taḥbīb* by Salahudheen Kozhithodi and Khairil Husaini Bin Jamil from **Ḥadīth and Ethics through the Lens of Interdisciplinarity**

Introduction

The Ḥanbalī Sufi scholar ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166) argues in his works, Futūḥ al-Ghayb (“Revelations of the Unseen”) and al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī (“The Sublime Revelation”), that a Sufi may enjoy certain worldly pleasures after struggling through various stages of asceticism (zuhd). This chapter discusses the scriptural foundation of this idea and how al-Jīlānī avoided the contradiction between the enjoyment of worldly pleasures and Sufi ethics, which is based on “self-purification.” We will analyse ḥadīth al-taḥbīb that translates as “I was made to love (ḥubbiba ilayya) from your world women and perfume, and I found the coolness of my eyes (qurratu ʿaynī) in performing the prayer,” and compare al-Jīlānī’s interpretation with that of other scholars in pre and post Jīlānī era.

Some ascetics and Sufis believed that marriage and family life are hindrances to achieving excellence in the path of Allāh, as evident from different quotations recorded in Sufi and zuhd literature. However, the majority refuted this idea pointing to the life of the Prophet and his encouragement for marital life. At the same time, the former opinion highlights the Prophet's foresight of later generations becoming worse overtime, and in such a time, it will be better for a person to live isolated from people.1 Likewise, some scholars found two key terms in the ḥadīth, "ḥubbiba" and "dunyā" problematic, hence necessitating explanation. How could the Prophet say that he loves things from this world (dunyā), whilst he has described it as a damned place elsewhere. Abstaining from the dunyā has often been regarded as the fundamental principle of asceticism and Sufism. These contradictions have triggered various interpretations and have sometimes placed the Sufis in a defensive mode.

Furthermore, some have criticised Sufis for enjoying worldly pleasures, and even al-Jīlānī himself had faced such criticism.2 By intertwining ḥadīth with Sufi perspectives, al-Jilānī responded to this criticism and apparent contradictions. At the same time, he tried to establish that the Sufi concepts of fanāʾ and baqāʾ, which refer to the developed form of asceticism, are not contradictory to the Qurʾān and Sunna as some may have claimed. Indeed, the ḥadīth mentioned above is a piece of excellent scriptural evidence to substantiate his stance.

Takhrīj and the Form of the Ḥadīth

The ḥadīth was recorded on the authority of Anas b. Mālik (d. 93/712) from the beginning of the third/ninth century in different sources, including those which were arranged according to themes and narrators such as Sunans and Musnads. Yet, among the six canonical ones, only al-Nasāʾī (d. 303/915) recorded it in his compendium.3 Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (d. 405/1014) recorded it in his Mustadrak and evaluated it as authentic by the standard of Muslim, though the latter did not record it in his work. Nevertheless, the great ḥadīth scholar and verifier, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1448), treated it as a considerable one (ḥasan) (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī 1995, 3:249).

In the primary thematic sources of ḥadīth, the ḥadīth of taḥbīb has been cited to highlight various issues including the status of ṣalāt (prayer) in Islam as found in Muḥammad b. Naṣr al-Marwazī's (d. 294/906) Taʿẓīm Qadr al-Ṣalāt ("The Aggrandisement of the Status of Prayer") (al-Marwazī 1986, 1:331). Al-Marwazī stated that ṣalāt is the most significant act of worship in the eyes of Allāh; thus, He made it dearer to His dearest servant. It is also recorded as an encouragement towards marriage in the book of Nikāḥ ("Marriage"), in Abū ʿAwāna's (d. 316/928) Mustakhraj ("The Extracted") and al-Bayḥaqī's (d. 458/1066) al-Sunan al-Kubrā ("The Great Sunnas"). Unlike the latter, the former gave quite a long title for his chapter to project the ḥadīth as an instruction by the Prophet to all Muslims to marry more than one wife whenever possible, to bring forth more good people into their community. For al-Nasāʾī, the ḥadīth instructs men to observe fair treatment of women. Therefore, he included it in the chapter of Kitāb ʿIshrat al-Nisāʾ ("Kind Treatment of Women") under the subheading of Bāb Ḥubb al-Nisāʾ ("Loving Women/Wives").

On the other hand, the part of the ḥadīth regarding fragrance has been the concern of other ḥadīth compilers such as ʿAbd al-Razzāq (d. 211/827) and Abū l-Shaykh (d. 369/979) (al-Aṣbahānī 1998, 2:58). The former presented it in a chapter titled Bāb al-Mar'a Tuṣallī wa-Laysa fī Raqabatihā Qilāda wa-Taṭayyub al-Rijāl ("A Woman Prays without a Necklace on Her Neck and Perfume of Men") in his Muṣannaf ("The Topically Arranged"), whereas the latter employed it in a chapter titled Bāb Dhikr Maḥabbatihi lil-Ṭībi wa-Taṭayyubihi bihi ("The Mention of the Prophet's Love for Perfumes"). Quite intriguingly, Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim (d.287/900) in his collection on asceticism alluded to the fact that wives and perfumes could not be considered as something against asceticism. His chapter is titled Bāb Ḥubbiba ilayya min Dunyākum al-Nisāʾ wa-l-Ṭīb ("Wives and Perfumes are Made Dearer to Me [the Prophet]") (Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim 1988, 1:119). The ḥadīth was also recorded in the Musnad ("The Supported") of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) and al-Muʿjam al-Awsaṭ ("The Middle Sized Muʿjam") of al-Ṭabarānī (d. 360/971) on the authority of Anas b. Mālik (Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal 2001, 19:305; al-Ṭabarānī 1995, 5:241).

Though the scholars have no serious disagreement on the authenticity of the ḥadīth, they have different opinions regarding its textual form. The most significant amongst such debates is the one concerning the number "three" (thalāth) found in some versions of the ḥadīth, i.e., "three things from your dunyā are made dear to me." While scholars like Ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015), al-Kalābādhī (d. 380/990) and al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) have tried to justify it, others like Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) have argued that it is not part of the original ḥadīth; instead, it was later added into the text.5 According to Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī and others, the addition "three" was not found in any primary sources of the ḥadīth. It was only found in some non-ḥadīth experts' works such as Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn (“The Revival of Religious Sciences”) of al-Ghazālī and al-Kashshāf (“The Revealer”) of al-Zamakhsharī (al-Sakhāwī 1985, 1:292).

Finally, another genre that could be said to have also pursued the debate on the literal form of the ḥadīth is the genre of al-aḥādīth al-mushtahira (viral ḥadīth). Some of the works of this genre include al-Maqāṣid al-Ḥasana (“The Good Purposes”) of al-Sakhāwī (al-Sakhāwī 1985, 1:292) and Kashf al-Khafāʾ (“Uncovering the Hidden”) of al-ʿAjlūnī (d. 1162/1749) (al-ʿAjlūnī 2000, 1:391–393). The authors validated the ḥadīth by referring to various narrations and additions found in different reports. However, both affirmed that the addition of the words “three things” was not found in any narrations recorded in the primary sources. For them, this addition affects the meaning of the ḥadīth because prayer should not be qualified as one of the worldly matters. Nevertheless, al-ʿAjlūnī, a later contributor to this genre, did not object to the views of those who report and interpret the “three things.” He attempted to justify that the third of the three things could have been omitted from the narration. It could be retrieved from a version reported by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal on the authority of ʿĀʾisha (d. 58/678), which reads, “He likes three things from this world: women, perfumes, and food. He gained two but not the third. He got women and perfumes but not the food” (al-ʿAjlūnī 2000, 1:391–393).

3 Ḥadīth of Taḥbīb: Interpretations in Ḥadīth Commentaries

In the pre-Jīlānī era, Sufis and people of zuhd were the individuals most interested in this ḥadīth. After al-Jīlānī, the ḥadīth of taḥbīb can be said to have gained wider attention. The main reason could be the increasing scholarly engagements with the Sunan of al-Nasāʾī. Another secondary source of the ḥadīth, which has also attracted numerous great exegetes to advance worthful discussions about its meaning, is al-Shifā (“The Healing”) of al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ (d. 544/1149). The ḥadīth was considered as a part of the shamāʾil (qualities and attributes) of the Prophet, particularly concerning his marital life. Continuous discussion on the ḥadīth within this genre could be appreciated from al-Mawāhib al-Ladunniyya (“The Divine Providences”) of al-Qasṭallānī (d. 686/1287). On the other hand, scholars of jurisprudence deduced rulings on fragrance from the ḥadīth. Due to the multidimensional nature of its interpretation, debates surrounding the ḥadīth will be tackled in several sections as follows.

Zuhd and Marriage: Conflict or Harmony?

The most critical point with regards to this debate is that, as far as the available sources are concerned, no scholar has connected this ḥadīth with the concepts of fanāʾ and baqāʾ prior to al-Jīlānī. A contemporary scholar of al-Jīlānī, al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, did discuss this ḥadīth, however with an attempt to suit the ḥadīth to the notion of zuhd (al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ 1987, 1:19–46). He averred that married life does not contradict with the practice of zuhd by citing the examples of married Prophets. Although there were unmarried Prophets, according to him, the ones who got married and fulfilled their family duties are deemed higher in status. Al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ perceived the ḥadīth as a general promotion for marriage whereas al-Jīlānī undoubtedly proclaimed that nikāḥ is prohibited for a murīd, and in terms of murād, he has no choice but to follow what has been determined by God.

Al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ's appropriation of this ḥadīth to zuhd was a response to those who thought that marriage is a hindrance on the path towards Allāh. In Qūṭ al-Qulūb ("The Nourishment of the Hearts") of Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996) and Iḥyā ʿUlūm al-Dīn of al-Ghazālī, imām Aḥmad was quoted as saying that he had debated a group of scholars regarding Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's (d. 110/728) claim that "if Allāh wishes khayr (goodness) for a person He will not occupy him with family and wealth" (al-Makkī 2005, 2, 413). The well-known Sufi contemporary to Aḥmad, Bishr al-Ḥāfī (d. 227/841) was not married, and when he was asked about it, he replied that he preferred to be engaged with obligatory deeds to the supererogatory ones (al-Ghazālī n.d., 2:23). The great Sufi literature, such as the two mentioned above, discusses both views that encourage or discourage marriage in detail and provide many traditions in support of both arguments.

As mentioned earlier, Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim argues that wives and perfumes could not be considered as something against asceticism. Yet, other works on asceticism included a section on Bāb man Kariha al-Māla wa-l-Walad ("Disinterest in Offspring and Wealth") in which some ascetics were reported to ask Allāh to be free from offspring and wealth. Astonishingly, when those ascetics wish to pray against anyone, they will pray that Allāh increase the person's wealth and children, so that he will be burdened with them (Ibn al-Jarrāḥ 1984, 415–417).

On another note, the Mālikī scholar Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 543/1148) attempted reconciliation by exploiting the change of condition across generations. Marriage was not a hindrance in the path of Allāh for the early generation. However, in later times, some scholars and ascetics found that the world had become more challenging, and people became compelled to commit prohibited acts to earn their livelihood and provide for their families. Therefore, the scholars and ascetics rejected family life and preferred seclusion (ʿuzla). Ibn al-ʿArabī viewed this stance as a strong position since the Messenger of Allāh had said: "The best possession of a Muslim will be a herd of sheep with which he retires to the top of a mountain or places where rain is expected to fall (pastures), in order to safeguard his faith from tribulation."6 However, he made it clear that there is no monasticism in Islam as found in Christianity, and one is not supposed to immerse in worship and avoid all worldly matters, including the family. The scholars who seem to favour a life similar to monasticism were actually referring to extraordinary circumstances due to the widespread of crisis (Ibn al-ʿArabī 2003, 3:144).

The tenth/seventeenth century scholar al-Ghazzī (d. 1061/1651) also quoted this ḥadīth to change the perception of people who manipulated the sayings of early scholars to discourage marriage, and to depict it as an act contradictory to asceticism. He treated all these statements as conditional; when a marriage diverts a person's attention from obeying Allāh and from abiding by His rules, then it is a hindrance in the path of worshipping Allāh. Any comforts with wives and fragrance in this world could not be treated generally as blameworthy. However, he did not provide explanation on how they deviate man from the straight path and how a person can overcome them (al-Ghazzī 2011, 1:184).

A pro-Salafī contemporary interpreter, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Nāṣir al-Barrāk (b. 1933–1934) used this ḥadīth to criticise Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī's (d. 795/1392) position on Kalimat al-Ikhlāṣ ("The Word of Devotion"). Ibn Rajab stated that "the ʿārifūn have no engagements other than what they have with their Lord and no concerns about something other than Him ..." According al-Barrāk, it is nothing but an utterance of some extreme ascetics who transcended the limits with a wrong ijtihād due to their ignorance. Al-Barrāk criticised this position on the ground that it contradicts the ḥadīth of taḥbīb. He finds no issue in engaging with family, children, and other lawful comforts. However, unlike his predecessors, he resorts to criticising Ibn Rajab instead of offering a reconciling interpretation (al-Barrāk 2014, 110).

Material World: Love or Curse?

In his commentary, al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ had given attention to the apparent contradiction between this ḥadīth and the Islamic concept of cursing the material world (dunyā), since this ḥadīth treats three things among worldly matters and depicts the dunyā as the loved one. Therefore, he noted that the Prophet did not see women and perfume as his worldly matters, but he used the words "your worldly matters." This was concluded from the addition found in some versions, i.e., the phrase ḥubbiba ilayya min dunyākum, which means some of your worldly matters that have been made dear to me.7 According to al-Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, the Prophet perceived these matters as his ākhira (the Hereafter) affairs since a Muslim can convert any worldly matter to that of the Hereafter by having the right niyya (insight). Nevertheless, a question remains due to this interpretation – it leaves no specific reason to the mention of only these two things since all worldly matters share the same potential of convertibility.

Other interpretations offered to solve this contradiction are those by al-Kalābādhī and al-Ghazālī. Al-Kalābādhī opines that the article "min" in the ḥadīth could be given the meaning of "fī" which then indicates that women, fragrance, and prayer are the three things made dear to the Prophet during his life in this world (ḥubbiba ilayya wa-anā fī l-dunyā), but they are not part of this world. Unlike later ḥadīth scholars, he treated the word three as a part of the ḥadīth and tried to answer two questions simultaneously: firstly, how can the Prophet love something that is a part of this world? and secondly, how can prayers be attributed as a part of this material world? Hence, these nonworldly affairs are made dear in this world while he was here. He further elaborated that this ḥadīth indicates a very high stage of ʿubūdiyya (worship) achieved by the Prophet. Prayer is the most elegant form of glorification (taʿẓīm) of Allāh, and this ḥadīth implies that the Prophet had attained it. The other two matters, women and fragrance, represent excellent interaction with the creations of Allāh, which should be done by fulfilling their due rights as well as being kind and generous towards them. He further added that fragrance is amongst the rights of the angels, and the Prophet was applying it to fulfil their rights. Indeed, the Prophet himself is the most beautiful fragrance in this world and he does not need any fragrance (al-Kalābādhī 1999, 25). In short, al-Kalābādhī attempted to establish that the love mentioned in this ḥadīth was not a mere love of comforts in the material world, rather it was part of achieving the finest form of ʿubūdiyya and excellent dealing with others.

Al-Ghazālī also viewed this ḥadīth as apparently contradicting with the basic principles of asceticism and Sufism, discussing it in the book of Dhamm al-Dunyā ("Condemnation of the Worldly"). He argued that the things found in the dunyā are of mainly three categories, the first of which are the things that will go to the next world, such as one's knowledge and actions. By knowledge he means the recognition of God, His attributes, His actions and His sovereignty over heaven and earth, and by actions, the actions done for the sake of God. To him, though it is part of the dunyā, it is not blameworthy but praiseworthy. To substantiate his position, he cited the ḥadīth of taḥbīb. Even though prayer is classified with the dunyā, it is an action done in the dunyā for the ākhira. Consequently, actions related to marriage and using fragrance, although mentioned as part of the dunyā, do not fall into the category of a blameworthy dunyā (al-Ghazālī n.d., 23).

Jurisprudential Perspective

In dealing with the ḥadīth of taḥbīb, most of the scholars of jurisprudence focused on the subject of fragrance. The Mālikī Ibn al-ʿArabī referenced this ḥadīth in his interpretation of al-Muwaṭṭaʾ ("The Well-Trodden Path"), titled Kitāb al-Qabas ("The Book of Allusion"), to explain away other ḥadīth that claimed the Prophet applied perfumes during ḥajj whilst it is considered a prohibition to do so during such ritual. Ibn al-ʿArabī grouped different opinions of scholars into four, the first of which is that applying perfumes while performing ḥajj and ʿumra is an exclusive right (khuṣūṣiyya) of the Prophet. It is allowed exclusively to him because it was specifically made dear to him by Allāh. Ibn al-ʿArabī further observed that the Prophet was given some privileges regarding whatever was made dear to him. In terms of prayer, it was obligatory for him to pray at night whilst it was only supererogatory for others. Likewise, he was allowed to marry more than four wives, as well as conduct his marriages without the presence of guardians and witnesses. Therefore, according to Ibn al-ʿArabī, it is not strange to have a special privilege for the Prophet in applying perfume during pilgrimage (Ibn al-ʿArabī 1992, 1:553). Ibn al-ʿArabī also discussed this ḥadīth in his commentary on Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī ("The Compilation of al-Tirmidhī") explaining that the Prophet never rejected perfume when it was offered to him because he needed it and at the same time, it was made dear to him, combining need and love here. It is possible in his case to reject things other than perfume if there is any reason to do so (Ibn al-ʿArabī n.d., 10:236). Obviously, the Prophet does not need fragrance since he himself is fragrant, therefore, by "need," Ibn al-ʿArabī might have intended his need to fulfill the rights of angels as mentioned above.

Taḥbīb as a Sublime Quality of the Prophet

As seen above, some jurists and Sufis have considered this ḥadīth as addressing a specific privilege of the Prophet. While al-Kalābādhī treated it as an indication of the most excellent form of human being reserved for the Prophet, Ibn al-ʿArabī treated it as a reason for a concession to marrying more than four wives and applying perfumes during pilgrimage. Likewise, this ḥadīth has been much discussed as part of the Prophet's shamā'il (sublime qualities of the Prophet). Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), in his commentary on Sunan al-Nasā'ī ("The Traditions of al-Nasā'ī"), investigates the wisdom behind the taḥbīb from two different angles. On the one hand, it is a balā' (hardship from God) because world matters have been made dear to a person whereas he needs to dedicate his love solely to God. Therefore, life has become the most challenging task for him. On the other hand, when the enemy of the Prophet accused him as being a sāḥir (sorcerer), or a poet who was oblivious to ordinary life, he became concerned with worldly matters to refute their claims. In that sense, it is not a hardship, but rather a mercy from God (al-Suyūṭī 1986, 61–63).

Al-Sindī (d. 170/787) added that the divine wisdom behind the Prophet's love towards women was educational. His wives could convey many lessons from his private affairs to the coming generations. As for the perfume, it was the dearest thing to the angels and as a prophet who dealt with angels, he was using it to please them. Al-Sindī infers that his ḥubb was not a mere love of worldly matters, but by doing so, he was fulfilling some noble objectives. However, the coolness of the eyes is located in the Prophet's conversation with God during his prayers. It conveys the idea that if a worldly pleasure hinders the love towards God, it is not a praiseworthy thing. It is only laudable when it enhances the love towards God (al-Sindī 1986, 61–62).

On another part, most of the interpreters of Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ ("The Niche of Lamps") such ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Dihlawī (d. 1052/1642) and ʿAlī l-Qārī (d. 1014/1606) also elaborated on the meaning of the ḥadīth. They have given some attention to the word "ḥubbiba" as it denotes that the love did not originate from the Prophet's nature or self, but that Allāh compelled him to be so as a mercy for mankind (al-Dihlawī 2014, 8:480; ʿAlī l-Qārī 2002, 8:3294). Though both of them were seen as coming from Sufi backgrounds, they did not relate taḥbīb with the Sufi concepts of baqāʾ and fanāʾ as found with al-Jīlānī.

In Nuzhat al-Majālis wa-Muntakhab al-Nafāʾis ("Unwinding Councils and Precious Selections"), al-Ṣaffūrī (d. 894/1489) narrated a background story, without any isnād, to offer context for the ḥadīth. It says that when the Prophet mentioned this ḥadīth, Abū Bakr (d. 13/634), ʿUmar (d. 23/644), ʿUthmān (d. 35/656) and ʿAlī (d. 40/661) responded one after another by citing the things that were made dear to them. Abū Bakr said that he was made to love three things from this world – to sit in front of the Prophet, to recite ṣalawāt (prayers) upon him and to spend his wealth for him. Thereupon ʿUmar said: "I was made to love three things from this world; commanding good, forbidding evil, and establishing the ḥudūd (the prescribed punishments)." Then ʿUthmān responded that he was made to love feeding the hungry, spreading salām (peace greeting), and praying at night while people are sleeping. Finally, ʿAlī said: "I was made to love three things from this world; fighting with the sword, fasting in summer and serving guests." Then the angel Gabriel informed the Prophet about things that he was made to love, saying: "I was made to love descending upon Prophets, carrying the message to Messengers, and praising Allāh the Lord of the Worlds." Then Allāh informed the Prophet about the three things that He likes most: a tongue that always recites dhikr, a thankful heart and a body that is patient during hardship (al-Ṣaffūrī 1867, 1:52–53). Al-Ṣaffūrī commented that when this ḥadīth reached the four eponymous founders of the legal madhāhib (legal schools), Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767) was reported to say: "I was made to love acquiring knowledge throughout the nights, avoiding self-praise and arrogance, and having a heart that avoids the love of dunyā." Mālik (d. 179/796) also related the three things that were made dear to him: being a neighbour to the Prophet's grave, attachment with his soil, and paying respect to his relatives (ahl al-bayt). Al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) said that he was made to love dealing with people with compassion, avoiding things that lead to pretentiousness, and following the way of taṣawwuf. Aḥmad responded that he was made to love following the Prophet in his sayings, seeking God's blessings with his lights, and embarking on the path of his examples (al-Ṣaffūrī 1867, 1:52–53). Indeed, al-Ṣaffūrī's extended story includes many of the major early Islamic figures, truly providing a lesson of "three" important loveable actions for later generations.

This long narration was repeated with some variations in al-Qasṭallānī's al-Mawāhib al-Laduniyya and al-ʿAjlūnī's Kashf al-Khafāʾ. Though the authenticity is questionable, this provides another unique understanding of the ḥadīth. It indicates that the things made dearer to people could be of anything apart from women and perfume. In a sense, it is congruent with al-Jīlānī's concept of taḥbīb where certain worldly pleasures are made dearer to specific individuals (al-ʿAjlūnī 2000, 1:391–393; al-Qasṭallānī n.d., 2:221).

Theosophical Perspective

It is not surprising to find that the one who treated this ḥadīth from a theosophical perspective was the renowned Sufi luminary Muḥyī l-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī. He interpreted this ḥadīth in Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam ("Bezels of Wisdom") appropriating it to a theosophical system called by others as "the unity of being" (waḥdat al-wujūd). Starting with Adam, each of the 27 chapters of Fuṣūṣ is dedicated to a Prophet mentioned in the Qurʾān. The chapters are based on a specific Qurʾānic verse or Prophetic ḥadīth that describes the characteristics of the respective Prophet. The final chapter is dedicated to the last Prophet Muḥammad, and its entire discussion is based on the ḥadīth of taḥbīb.

According to Ibn al-ʿArabī, all things are reflections of a unique and unified Absolute Reality, God. Some things are a greater manifestation compared to others, such as the Prophets amongst other creatures and Prophet Muḥammad amongst other Prophets – he is the highest manifestation. He also believed that a woman is the one who completes a man's recognition of the divine, and a man's witnessing of God in a woman is the most excellent witnessing. After quoting the first part of the ḥadīth, "three things from your dunyā are made dear to me," Ibn al-ʿArabī said that among the three, Allāh started with women even before prayer due to this state (Bālī Zādah 2002, 312–313). Unlike other interpreters, he gave much attention to the order stated in the ḥadīth. To him, knowing a woman is part of knowing one's self since she is an excellent manifestation of the oneness of being. Only those who achieve that knowledge can reach the core of prayer, which is a part of knowing God. Whoever knows himself knows his Lord. According to him:

> When man witnesses Allāh in women, his witnessing is in the passive; when he witnesses Him in himself, regarding the appearance of woman from Him, he witnesses Him in the active. When he witnesses Him from himself without the presence of any from him, his witnessing is in the passive directly from Allāh without any intermediary. So, his witnessing of Allāh in the woman is the most complete and perfect because he witnesses Allāh inasmuch as He is both active and passive. For this reason, the Prophet, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, loved women.

According to his interpretation, the love of women is not a matter of worldly pleasure; instead, it is a medium for acquiring the ultimate knowledge about God, which is called maʿrifa (gnosis). He further argued that every subject yearns for its origin. Man yearns for his Lord8 because He created man in His image by blowing His rūḥ (spirit). God loves him, who is in His image. Likewise, He makes loveable to man the woman whom He extracted for him from him and who appeared in His image. When a man loves a woman, he desires their union, and the best way to achieve it is through marriage. Ibn al-ʿArabī states:

> When a man loves a woman, he seeks union with her, that is to say the most complete union possible in love, and there is in the elemental sphere no greater union than that between the sexes. It is [precisely] because such desire pervades all his parts that man is commanded to

> perform the major ablution. Thus, the purification is total, just as his annihilation in her was total at the moment of consummation. God is jealous of his servant that he should find pleasure in any but Him, so He purifies him by the ablution, so that he might once again behold Him in the one in whom he was annihilated, since it is none other than He Whom he sees in her.

In terms of the fragrance (ṭīb), the Prophet mentioned it after women because women are the best perfume. They have fragrance in their form (takwīn) itself, and the best perfume is the embracement of the well-beloved (Ibn ʿArabī 2014, 128).

Ultimately, within the domain of ḥadīth literature, the association of taḥbīb with the concepts of fanāʾ and baqāʾ was only found in the writings of ʿAbd al-Raʾūf al-Munāwī (d. 1031/1622), an Ottoman scholar from Cairo. He was known for his works on the early history of Islam and the history of Sufism in Egypt, and he was also a disciple of al-Shaʿrānī (d. 973/1565). In his seminal work, Fayḍ al-Qadīr ("Revelation of the Omnipotent"), al-Munāwī mentions that some scholars have related taḥbīb with fanāʾ and baqāʾ and, to them, the ḥadīth refers to a state after fanāʾ. When an aspirant annihilates in God without having any personal intention and desire, God places some worldly matters in his mind. Yet, al-Munāwī did not mention al-Jīlānī by name. Nevertheless, it is after al-Munāwī that this concept found extensive elaboration in ḥadīth interpretive discourse (al-Munāwī 1937, 3:371).

Ḥadīth al-Taḥbīb in al-Jīlānī's Works

The ḥadīth of taḥbīb was mentioned two times in al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī and once in Futūḥ al-Ghayb.9 In al-Fatḥ, the ḥadīth has been quoted as: "I was made to love from your world women and perfume, and the delight of my eyes has always been in the prayer." In some latest editions of al-Fatḥ, there is an addition of the words "three things," i.e., "I was made to love three things from your world;" however, they were absent in the earliest one. The addition was also found in the early editions of Futūḥ al-Ghayb. This addition has caught the attention of many ḥadīth scholars since it raises some questions as explained above.

The apparent meaning that an ordinary reader gets from the ḥadīth is that the Prophet likes perfumes and women, yet he still found real happiness whilst performing prayers. Qurrat al-ʿayn (literally, the coolness of the eyes) is an Arabic metaphor for enjoyment as the tears become cold when a person becomes extremely happy (Ibn Manẓūr 1993, 12:582).

In the seventh discourse on “patience” in al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī, a lecture that al-Jīlānī delivered in his ribāṭ (Sufi lodge) on 17 Shawwāl 545 (13 February 1151), he elaborated on the ḥadīth of taḥbīb uttering the following:

> Hate all things and love the creator of all things. Then if He makes you love one of the things you have hated, you may do so in safety, because He is the one giving rise to the love, not you. This is why the Prophet, Allāh bless him and give him peace, said: “I have been made to love three things: perfume, women, and the coolness of my eyes (chief comfort) is in the prayer.” He was made to love them after disliking, forsaking, renouncing, and shunning them. You must now rid your heart of everything aside from Him until He makes you love whatever part thereof, He will.

Again, in his speech on “renouncing worldly affairs” on 19 Dhū l-Ḥijja 545 (15 April 1151), he quoted the same ḥadīth saying:

> When a person is sincere (ṣādiq) in his asceticism, his allotted shares (of worldly things) come to him. He receives them and uses them to clothe himself outwardly, while his heart is filled with abstemiousness toward them and other such things. This is why our Prophet Muḥammad, Allāh bless him and give him peace, was more ascetic than Jesus, blessings and peace be upon him, and the other Prophets, blessings and peace be upon them, although he did say: “I have been made to love three things belonging to this world of yours: perfume, women and my chief comfort is given in prayer.”
>
> He loved all these, despite his abstemiousness towards them and other things, because they were part of his allotted share, of which his Lord, almighty and Glorious is He, had foreknowledge. So, he accepted them in fulfilment of the (Lord’s) commandment. Carrying out that commandment is obedience, so whoever receives his allotted shares in this manner is in a state of obedience, even if he is fully involved in this world.

In the two quotes above, al-Jīlānī did not connect the ḥadīth to the concepts of fanāʾ and baqāʾ, two well-known concepts in Sufism. However, in Futūḥ al-Ghayb, the ḥadīth was discussed in the sixth discourse on al-fanāʾ ʿan al-khalq (vanishing from the creature). Apart from this, two other stages of fanāʾ were explained here: vanishing from desires, and vanishing from one’s own will, together with the signs of each stage. For the first, a person should completely avoid all social contact with people to free his mind from desiring what they possess (al-Jīlānī 1973, 14). For the second, it is a sign to discard all efforts for, and contact, with worldly means in acquiring any benefits and avoiding any harms. Al-Jīlānī explained it as:

> to not move oneself in one's own interest and to not rely on oneself in matters concerning oneself and to not protect oneself nor help oneself, instead, leave the entire things to God; because He had the charge of it in the beginning, so will have it till the end, just as the charge rested on Him, when you were hidden in the womb (of your mother) as also when you were being suckled as a baby in the cradle.

> The sign of vanishing from one's will is to maintain the passivity of the organs of his body and the calmness of his heart at the time of the manifestation of the will and act of God, without entertaining any resolve or having any desire. This passivity is not unique to taḥbīb, rather it is discussed with the highest level of almost all other Sufi concepts, for example, riḍā (satisfaction) (Khalil 2014, 378). At this moment, one will not have any feeling of internal need nor any purpose, God will be his only objective.

Passing these three stages, an aspirant will reach into a phase called baqāʾ (subsistence). Al-Jīlānī explains the ultimate stage, baqāʾ, an aspirant reaches by passing through the above-mentioned three different levels:

> After this experience, you will never remain broken down. Neither any sensual desire nor any will remain in you like a broken vessel that retains neither any water nor any dreg. And you will be devoid of all human actions so that your inner self will accept nothing but the will of God. At this stage, miracles and supernatural things will be ascribed to you. These things will be seen as if proceeding from you when in fact they will be acts of God and His will.
>
> Thus, you will be admitted to the company of those whose hearts have been smashed and their animal passions have vanished. Hence, they have been inspired by the Divine will and new desires of daily existence. It is about this stage that the Holy Prophet PBUH, says: "Three things have been made dearer to me …"

In his work, al-Ghunya li-Ṭālibī Ṭarīq al-Ḥaqq ("Richness for the Seeker of the Truth"), al-Jīlānī does not reference the ḥadīth neither to encourage marital life nor to promote the use of perfumes as many early and later scholars had done. Unlike his two works mentioned above, al-Ghunya focuses on human faith and actions in day-to-day affairs, including the etiquette of marriage. While readers would expect to find the ḥadīth in the work, with the scholar exploiting its popular sense of promoting marital life and perfuming, this was not the case. Al-Jīlānī's neglect of the ḥadīth in al-Ghunya while having given detailed discussion in the other two works supports the perception that he did not give any attention to its apparent and popular meaning.

Al-Jīlānī's Interpretation of the Ḥadīth and Taḥbīb

In his interpretation of the ḥadīth, al-Jīlānī focuses on the word "ḥubbiba" which means made to love. Given this passive form, a reader would become curious about the actor who influences the Prophet. Who made those things dearer to him? There are four possible answers; he is either controlled by his own passion, by his hawā (desire), by Satan, or by God. For Muslims, the first three are impossible in the case of the Prophet, for a prophet could not be a person who is driven by his desire, passion, or Satan. The basics of Islamic teachings emphasise disobeying satanic inspirations; therefore, it could not be expected from a prophet. The only remaining possibility is God, the Almighty. If that is the case, further clarification is much needed.

Although some scholars have tried to elaborate on the word ḥubbiba, they confine this ḥadīth to the life of the Prophet, as can be learned from the aforementioned discussions of the pre- and post-Jīlānī interpretations. However, al-Jīlānī generalised taḥbīb by describing it as a stage in a Sufi's life, which contributes a significant addition in the ḥadīth interpretive discourse and Sufi tradition. He says: "… Thus you will be admitted to the company of those whose hearts have been smashed and their animal passions have vanished." Hence, they have been inspired by the Divine will and new desires of daily existence. It is about this stage that the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allāh be upon him, says "Three things have been made dearer to me …" (al-Jīlānī n.d., trans. Ahmad, 31–32). That means a Sufi may be made to enjoy certain worldly pleasures after struggling through various stages of asceticism (zuhd) to eventually end up in the ultimate goal, fanāʾ. At this stage, God will make him long for some worldly comforts according to His will – and this can be concluded as an act of taḥbīb.

Al-Jīlānī applies this concept even to marriage, which is generally perceived as an act of Sunna by the majority of scholars. It indicates that if an act is not an obligatory one, it would be subjected to this theory as well. That is very clear from the application of this concept in his own life. Nevertheless, in his commentary on al-Jīlānī's Futūḥ al-Ghayb, Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) attempted to reconcile this theory, and the concept of fanāʾ in general, with the principles of Sharīʿa by reducing them to worldly affairs usually treated as merely permissible (mubāḥ) and not as praiseworthy in Islam. For Ibn Taymiyya, something which is praiseworthy should not be forbidden, even according to the path of Sufism. However, this could be regarded as a bend of al-Jīlānī's thought, as it does not bode well with what al-Jīlānī himself had proposed and explained, or how he applied it in his own life (Ibn Taymiyya n.d., 31).

The Exemplification of the Concept in al-Jīlānī's Personal Life

Al-Jīlānī seems to have believed that he had reached the prime stage of Sufism, fanāʾ, wherein a Sufi will experience taḥbīb in his life. A perfect example for this is his own marriage life. Although Islam encourages marriage, as in various Qurʾānic verses and Prophetic ḥadīths, a Sufi's understanding of marriage is quite different from that of the layman. When al-Jīlānī was asked about marriage, he answered – after giving a brief remark on its jurisprudential aspect – that, from a Sufi perspective, marriage is prohibited for a murīd, a person who strives in the path of God and has not achieved his goal. In terms of a murād, a person who has reached the prime stage of Sufism, Allāh will engage him either with marriage or with something else, and he need not bother about it (al-Jīlānī 1988, 345).

The above two Sufi terminologies (fanāʾ and taḥbīb), indicate two different stages in Sufism. However, once a Sufi reaches the paramount, he has no choice to wish something for himself. Instead, Allāh will wish for him something and make him love it, and he will wholeheartedly accept it. After getting married in his forties, al-Jīlānī was addressed with several questions concerning his marriage. He then answered: "I waited for consent from the Prophet until he suggested [to] me to do so [the Prophet appeared to him in a dream]. Then I married four wives. Therefore, they never became a hindrance in my spiritual path" (al-Suhrawardī 1971, 1:343). The marriage, thus, was instructed. One could also notice from al-Jīlānī's response that he considered the Prophet's instruction through dreams as one of the signs of taḥbīb.

Another exemplification of taḥbīb theory in his life were his own lectures in which he says:

> Allāh's destiny made me sit here although I did not wish to do it. O pupils, I have spoken out, but you are running away and not practising! My name in other countries is akhras (dumb, mute). I used to pretend to be crazy, dumb, or unable to speak Arabic, but it was not correct for me. Destiny brought me out here to you. I was in the underground storage bins when it pulled me out and made me sit on the lecture seat.

Similar expressions about him being exposed can be found in many places in his two major works, al-Fatḥ and Futūḥ. This association with people has been justified as wujūd (existence) after fanāʾ (annihilation). It is also represented by other terminologies such as basṭ (expansion) after qabḍ (contraction), and jamʿ (gathering) after tafriqa (separation), and ṣaḥw (sobriety) after sukr (intoxication) (al-Jīlānī 1988, 213, 173, 364).

How does Allāh make a person who reached that stage love worldly affairs and how do we know whether God or others caused that inclination? These are questions that arise from the points mentioned above. As previously mentioned, sometimes the Prophet comes in a dream and gives direction to symbolise taḥbīb. A similar experience was reported to occur to the early Sufi, Abū l-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 297/910) (al-Jīlānī 1988, 356). Interestingly, al-Jīlānī himself was confronted with these questions as related in the sixty-first discourse in al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī. Al-Jīlānī's reply was:

> How to explain to you what notions are? Your notions come from the devil (shayṭān), natural impulses (ṭabʿ), the passion (hawā) and this world. Your interest (hamm) and concern are whatever is more important to you (ahammaka). Your notions correspond in kind to your interest while it is active. A notion (khāṭir) inspired by the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) comes only to the heart, free from anything apart from Him. He said: Allāh forbid that we should seize anyone except him with whom we found our property (Q 12:79). If Allāh and His remembrance (dhikr) are present with you, your heart will certainly be filled with His nearness, and the notions suggested by the devil, the passions and this world will all avoid your company. There is a kind of notion belonging to this world and a notion belonging to the Hereafter. There is a notion belonging to the angels, and a notion belonging to the lower self (nafs), and a notion belonging to the heart. There is also a notion belonging to the Lord of Truth (Almighty and glorious is He). If you reject the notion of the lower self, the notion of the passions, the devil's notion and the notion of the world, the notion of the Hereafter will come to you. Then you will receive the angel's notion, then finally the notion of the Lord of Turth (Almighty and Glorious is He). This is the ultimate stage.

He further says:

> When your heart is sound, it will pause to ask each notion as it arises: What kind of notion are you? From what source do you come? So, they will tell him in return: "I am the notion of such and such. I am a true notion from the Truth (khāṭir ḥaqq min al-ḥaqq). I am a loving counsellor; the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) loves you so love you too. I am ambassador (safīr). I am the portion of the spiritual state (ḥāl) of the prophethood (nubuwwa)."
> O young man! You must devote your attention to real knowledge (maʿrifa) of Allāh (Almighty and glorious is He), for it is the root of all that is good. If you are constant in obedience to Him, He will grant you real knowledge of Himself.

From his lengthy explanation, it can be understood that, at a particular stage, a person will be able to differentiate between notions, whether they come from God or others.

However, it is difficult to explain the form of each notion to someone who has not attained such a status. For those who have attained it, the forms are not at all relevant to them, since they can identify the notions without prior knowledge of the forms.

Taḥbīb and the Concepts of Fanāʾ and Baqāʾ

The state of taḥbīb is a stage after fanāʾ, and it can be perceived as a stage associated with baqāʾ, the ultimate goal of an aspirant. Fanāʾ indicates the notion of "dying metaphorically before the real death," which represents a breaking down of the individual ego and a recognition of the fundamental unity of God, creation, and the individual self. Individuals who have entered this enlightened state obtain awareness of the intrinsic unity (tawḥīd) between Allāh and all that exists, including the individual's mind. It is coupled conceptually with baqāʾ, subsistence, the state of pure consciousness and abidance in God (see fanāʾ and baqāʾ in Murata 2018).

In Futūḥ al-Ghayb, al-Jīlānī related taḥbīb with the concept of fanāʾ, whereas, in two other places in al-Fatḥ al-Rabbānī, he connected it with two different ideas. In one of them it is related to asceticism, as explained in the first part of this chapter. According to al-Jīlānī, zuhd is the way to achieve fanāʾ, and that is also apprehended when the statements in Futūḥ and Fath are considered together. While he talks about zuhd in Futūḥ, al-Jīlānī uses the term fanāʾ; he says "ifna ʿan al-khalq," that means to abstain from the creatures. The state represents the beginning of the ultimate fanāʾ. Zuhd is fanāʾ ʿan (abstain from), but the real fanāʾ is fanāʾ fī, annihilation or dissolution in God. After fanāʾ from people, an aspirant should go forward to fanāʾ from desires, then, fanāʾ from his own will. Eventually, he will acquire fanāʾ in God.

The other context wherein this ḥadīth was quoted in Fatḥ is where it was related to ṣabr (patience) or being content with qaḍāʾ (divine decree) and qadar (fate). In this regard, al-Jīlānī says: "Hate all things and love the Creator of all things. Then, if He makes you love one of the things you have hated …" To hate things calls for zuhd, and only by going through different stages of zuhd, one can reach fanāʾ in Allāh and subsequently the stage of taḥbīb.

To denote the stages of fanāʾ, the central theme of the two books, al-Jīlānī sometimes uses different words, such as inkisār (to be broken), and called the heart of such a person "broken hearted." He says:

> This world belongs to one set of people, the hereafter belongs to another set of people, and the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) belongs to yet another set of people, namely the truly convinced believers … who are grief-stricken and broken-hearted for His sake.

Broken-hearted here indicates that no self-interest or intention has remained in the heart; it is broken and keeps nothing. Likewise, al-Jīlānī's statement of "al-akhdh (possess) after al-tark (renounce)," indicates that a zāhid fears to take from this world because he fears to lose his beloved, the Almighty (al-Jīlānī 1988, 362). But the one who achieved the ultimate zuhd takes from it without any fear, while gnosis emanates from Him. That appears as the meaning of his statement "al-tark zuhd wa-l-akhdh maʿrifa" (to renounce is ascetism and to possess is gnosis) (al-Jīlānī 1988, 362). Whoever reaches this stage attains real happiness in this world (al-Jīlānī 1988, 62).

Conclusion

ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, a Ḥanbalī Sufi scholar, can be regarded as first interpreter of the taḥbīb ḥadīth who blended it with two essential Sufi concepts; fanāʾ and baqāʾ. However, his interpretation does not attract much attention from the exegetes of ḥadīth, and this was the case for five centuries, until al-Munāwī accentuated this discussion in his seminal work Fayḍ al-Qadīr. Al-Jīlānī's exposition differs from the popular understanding of the ḥadīth. According to him, it could not be treated as an unconditional encouragement for marriage and perfuming, it could have pointed otherwise. Moreover, there is no point, according to him, to restrict the love mentioned in the ḥadīth to only the two subjects. Instead, the ḥadīth refers to a stage associated with baqāʾ (subsistence) that an aspirant has achieved after passing through the different states of fanāʾ (annihilation) by being persistent in asceticism. Once he achieves it, Allāh will make him love some worldly comforts. Yet, in the case of the Prophet, women and perfumes were the things that were made dearer to him. The concept of fanāʾ and baqāʾ was not something new to medieval Sufism. Instead, they were already embraced by al-Jīlānī's great predecessors such as al-Kharrāz (d. 286/899) and al-Junayd. In this regard, al-Jīlānī's approach could be treated as a defensive response to those who depicted Sufis as the adversaries of the Qurʾān and Sunna. This exploration of al-Jīlānī’s idea could be appreciated as an invitation to study his attempt to substantiate other Sufi concepts with the scriptural basis, particularly the ḥadīth. This study covered almost all interpretations by the exegetes of ḥadīth in the pre- and post-Jilānī era. However, the influence of al-Jīlānī’s new understanding of the ḥadīth on Sufis themselves requires further analysis. Ultimately, the intertwinement of ḥadīth and Sufism can be appreciated as a mechanism for ethical discourse as evident in the scholarship of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī. <>

Ḥadīth and Ethics through the Lens of Interdisciplinarity edited by Mutaz al-Khatib الحديث والأخلاق: مقاربة متعددة التخصصات [Series: Studies in Islamic Ethics, Brill, ISBN: 9789004525924]

This volume addresses the interplay of ḥadīth and ethics and contributes to examining the emerging field of ḥadīth-based ethics. The chapters cover four different sections: noble virtues (makārim al-akhlāq) and virtuous acts (faḍāʾil al-aʿmāl); concepts (adab, taḥbīb, ʿuzla); disciplines (ḥadīth transmission, gender ethics); and individual and key traditions (the ḥadīth of intention, consult your heart, key ḥadīths). The volume concludes with a chronologically ordered annotated bibliography of the key primary sources in the Islamic tradition with relevance to understanding the interplay of ḥadīth and ethics. This volume will be beneficial to researchers in the fields of Islamic ethics, ḥadīth studies, moral philosophy, scriptural ethics, religious ethics, and narrative ethics, in addition to Islamic and religious studies in general.

Contributors

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يتناول هذا الكتاب الصلة بين الحديث والأخلاق، الأمر الذي لم يحظ بالاهتمام في الدراسات المعاصرة حول الأخلاق الإسلامية. فهو يؤسس لفرع أخلاقي جديد اسمه «الأخلاق الحديثية» التي تشكل مع أخلاق القرآن ما يسمى «الأخلاق النصية». يغطي الكتاب جوانب نظرية وأخرى تطبيقية. فهو يبرز المضمون الأخلاقي الثري لمدونات الحديث، ويضم أربعة أقسام رئيسة هي: مكارم الأخلاق وفضائل الأعمال، ومفاهيم: الأدب والتحبيب

والعزلة، كما يتناول الأبعاد الأخلاقية لرواية الحديث والجندر)النوع الاجتماعي(، بالإضافة إلى الأحاديث المفردة)كحديث إنما الأعمال بالنيات، وحديث استفتِ قلبك (والأحاديث الكلية التي تشكل أصول الحديث ومبادئه الكبرى .يحتوي الكتاب أيضًا على كشاف تحليليّ لأبرز مصنفات المحدثين في الأخلاق .من شأن هذا الكتاب أن يكون مرجعًا للطلاب والباحثين في المجالات الآتية :الأخلاق الإسلامية، والحديث النبوي، والفلسفة الأخلاقية، والأخلاق النصية، والأخلاق الدينية، وأخلاقيات السرد، بالإضافة إلى الدراسات الإسلامية والدينية بشكل عام.

المساهمون

شفيق اكّريكّر، وصفوان أمير، وخَيرئيل حسيني بن جميل، ومحمد عمران خان، ومعتز الخطيب، ونهى الشعار، وفقيه الدين عبد القدير، وبيتر كوپنس، وصلاح الدين كوزيتودي، وعلي ألطاف ميان

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This edited volume addresses the link between ḥadīth (Prophetic reports) and ethics, or what can be termed as “ḥadīth-based ethics.” Despite ḥadīth (or Sunna) historically being the second normative source in Islam after the Qurʾān, this topic has not received sufficient attention in the contemporary scholarship on Islamic ethics. Indeed, ḥadīth played a key role in the development of Islamic thought and in forming ʿulūm al-sharīʿa (Islamic sciences), as has been noted by some contemporary scholars. This volume introduces ḥadīth-based ethics as a sub-discipline of Islamic ethics and fills the gap within the scholarship on Islamic ethics and ḥadīth studies since one of its key characteristics is applying an interdisciplinary approach to both ḥadīth and ethics.

Approaching ḥadīth as a reference for ethics reflects the intensity of the ethical content contained in the Prophetic traditions and practices. To do so, one can distinguish between two levels of analysis. At the first level, the Prophetic Sunna is approached as a revealed reference or an exemplary application of the revelation. At the second level, the Sunna is approached as a historical reference for the ethics that prevailed in the formative period of Islamic history.

The mainstream position in Islamic history has held that declaring things and actions as good (taḥsīn) or bad (taqbīḥ) should be premised on revelation, not on human intellect as claimed by the Muʿtazila (ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1960–1996, 6/1:7–8, 6/2:323; al-Taftāzānī 1998, 4:282–283; Hourani 1985, 57–66; Shihadeh 2016, 384–407). If this is the case, then it should have been the standard that the Qurʾān and ḥadīth are the sources of both legislation and ethics. Historical reality, however, shows such theorising in Islamic legal theory (uṣūl al-fiqh) and jurisprudence (fiqh) but not so much in the field of Islamic ethics, where the role of ḥadīth or Sunna, like the Qurʾān, has been marginalised in classical Islamic moral philosophy. Furthermore, Majid Fakhry (d. 2021), in his book Ethical Theories in Islam, and Muḥammad ʿĀbid al-Jābirī (d. 2010), in his book al-ʿAql al-Akhlāqī l-ʿArabī (“The Arabic Moral Reason”), introduced what were claimed to be comprehensive overviews of Islamic literature on ethics in the Islamic tradition (Fakhry 1991; al-Jābirī 2001), but ḥadīth was, as clearly reflected in their works, absent in their overview of ethics in the Islamic tradition.

In contrast to the case of theoretical ethics, the practical and behavioural elements of the Prophetic ḥadīth have received extensive attention by ḥadīth scholars who have produced a vast genre, including the ethical aspects of Sunna. An extensive amount of ḥadīth literature has also been dedicated to ādāb (sing. adab, etiquettes and good manners) which have sometimes addressed professional ethics, such as the ādāb of the narrator of ḥadīth and the one who listens to him (ādāb al-rāwī wa-l-sāmiʿ), and the ādāb of the senior and junior jurists (ādāb al-faqīh wa-l-mutafaqqih). Additionally, some books have focused on outlining good and bad character (maḥāsin al-akhlāq wa-masāwiʾuhā), religious etiquettes (al-ādāb al-sharʿiyya), the etiquette of dealing with parents (birr al-wālidayn) and so forth. Other books are dedicated to the virtues and vices (al-faḍāʾil wa-l-radhāʾil); books enlisting incentives to do good (targhīb) and deterrents from doing evil (tarhīb); books concerned with the branches of faith (shuʿab al-īmān); books on virtues which vary according to persons, ages and times; and the Sufi literature on asceticism (zuhd), remembrance of God, supplication (ādāb al-duʿāʾ), spiritual diseases of the heart (iʿtilāl al-qulūb) and so on (al-Kattānī 1993, 50–60).

The six canonical collections of ḥadīth also had specific chapters dedicated to the aḥādīth on manners and ethics, whose total number reached more than 500 in the Sunan compiled by Abū Dāwūd (d. 275/888) and exceeded 600 in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Ibn Ḥibbān (d. 354/965) (al-Arnāʾūṭ and al-Qayyām 1999, 1:8). Moreover, the ethics of the Prophet (akhlāq al-nabī) were the subject of dedicated books, such as Abū l-Shaykh's work (1998), or occupied segments in books on the biography of the Prophet, meant to provide the exemplary model of ethics to be followed.

This Book

Against this background, the majority of this volume's chapters originated from a seminar I convened on "Ḥadīth and Ethics: Concepts, Approaches and Theoretical Foundations," at the Research Center for Islamic Legislation and Ethics (CILE) between 30 April and 2 May 2019. This seminar complemented a previous initiative on "Qurʾān and Ethics" within CILE's broader vision, which seeks to canonise the field of Islamic ethics through two different methods: teaching and producing reference works that help to fill the gaps and theorise the field.

This volume consists of 12 chapters that address the interplay of ḥadīth and ethics and contribute to examining ḥadīth-based ethics, which will hopefully inspire future studies to cover further aspects of this emerging field.

Broadly speaking, the chapters included in this volume cover five main aspects related to ḥadīth and ethics:

1. a theoretical foundation for ḥadīth-based ethics as a scholarly sub-discipline of Islamic ethics (chapter 1);
2. virtue ethics: noble virtues (makārim al-akhlāq) and virtuous acts (faḍāʾil al-aʿmāl), covered by chapters 4 and 5;
3. moral concepts (adab, taḥbīb, ʿuzla), covered by chapters 2, 6 and 7;
4. ḥadīth-related sub-disciplines (ḥadīth transmission, gender ethics), covered by chapters 8 and 9; and
5. foundational ḥadīths on ethics (the ḥadīth of intention, consult your heart, and other key ḥadīths), which are covered by chapters 3, 10 and 11.

These five sections offer various approaches to studying ethics in ḥadīth works. Chapters 1 through 5 focus on the overarching framework to scriptural ethics. As is argued in chapter 2, ḥadīth-based ethics "initiated an epistemological shift in the understanding of adab; namely, that it had been informed solely by customary law and human knowledge but came to be seen as dictated by divine command and associated with religious sensitivity." In chapter 3, examining specific key traditions is employed as one approach to study ethics in ḥadīth. Chapter 4 on Ibn Abī l-Dunyā (d. 281/894) represents an attempt to establish a new field by Islamising common morality through ḥadīth. In chapter 5, which takes the case of al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) and his commentators, the author examines what "ḥadīth-based ethics" means: is it only its attribution to the Prophet as long as it is about common knowledge of morality, or should it strictly follow the technicalities of authenticity as outlined in the ḥadīth sciences?

Chapters 6–7 and 10–11 focus on discipline-based approaches where ethics is studied through (a) personal accounts: al-Jīlānī's (d. 561/1166) conception and practice of taḥbīb, and al-Nābulusī's (d. 1143/1731) conception and practice of seclusion, and (b) interdisciplinary approaches where individual ḥadīths are analysed through the lens of different disciplines, such as the ḥadīths: "deeds are judged by intention" and "consult your heart." Chapters 8 and 9 especially focus on the role of interpretation in restoring the fundamental idea of ḥadīh as deeply intertwined with ethics. Chapter 8, in particular, utilises a Derridean trace to present the quṣṣāṣ' (storytellers/preachers) impact on the Sunna's transmission to the wider Muslim community. Meanwhile chapter 9 addresses "conflicting ḥadīths" (mukhtalif al-ḥadīth) in searching for egalitarian gender ethics.

Chapter 12 can be considered as an appendix in which a classification of the key primary sources in the Islamic tradition that are relevant to the field of ḥadīth and ethics are presented in the form of an annotated bibliography.

After outlining the key ideas and approaches examined in this volume and the rationale of combining them together in one work, below, I provide a more elaborate overview of each chapter:

In chapter 1, "Ḥadīth-based Ethics: Ḥadīth as a Scholarly Sub-Discipline of Islamic Ethics," Mutaz al-Khatib lays out the foundations for ḥadīth-based ethics as a sub-discipline in Islamic ethics. This chapter provides the theoretical ground for the following chapters that tackle some of the issues in this emerging field. It reveals the value of ḥadīth as a corpus on ethics, conceptualises "ḥadīth-based ethics," classifies relevant works, and defines the key themes and issues in this emerging discipline.

In chapter 2, "Ḥadīth and the Concept of Adab as Moral Education," Nuha Alshaar treats the interaction between ḥadīth and the concept of "adab," historically a term with wide semantic meanings. Adab here is dealt with primarily as knowledge, an ethical call to action, and, especially, as a required form of training for those aspiring to maintain good manners, proper etiquette, and cleanse the soul.

In chapter 3, “al-Aḥādīth al-Kulliyya: Min al-Aḥkām al-Tafṣīliyya ilā al-Qawāʿid wa-l-Mabādiʾ al-Akhlāqiyya” (“Beyond Aḥādīth al-Aḥkām: From Detailed Rulings to Ethical Fundamentals and Principles”), Mutaz al-Khatib argues that the ḥadīth corpus comprises of key traditions that can serve as proper foundations for approaching ḥadīth literature as a repository of ethics, and where the focus will move: (a) from studying individual traditions to examining the overall governing system of ḥadīth; and (b) from the mono-disciplinary approach where fiqh is dominant, to an interdisciplinary approach where fiqh is one part of a much larger whole. The main part of this chapter analyses the key ḥadīths categorised by ḥadīth scholars, including Abū Dāwūd (d. 275/888), Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643/1245), al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) and others, such as jawāmiʿ al-kalim or those upon which the edifice of the Islamic tradition is constructed (al-aḥādīth allatī ʿalayhā madār al-islām).

In chapter 4, “al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Abī l-Dunyā wa-l-Taʾsīs li-Akhlāqiyyāt al-Makārim” (“Ibn Abī l-Dunyā and the Formation of the Ethics of Noble Deeds”), Chafik Graiguer argues that Ibn Abī l-Dunyā’s work can be seen as an attempt to establish a ḥadīth-based ethics where makārim al-akhlāq refers to: human dignity, murūʾa (which contains a set of values in Arab pre-Islamic morality) and rationality. Ibn Abī l-Dunyā’s work also addresses faḍāʾil, hence the ethics in Ibn Abī l-Dunyā’s work are scriptural, in terms of form, and rational, in terms of content and sources.

In chapter 5, “Narrations on Virtuous Acts in Epitomes of al-Ghazālī’s Iḥyāʾ: From Ibn al-Jawzī’s Minhāj al-Qāṣidīn to its Reception in Modernity,” Pieter Coppens focuses on the reception of the Iḥyāʾ in the Ḥanbalī circles of Baghdad and Damascus, with the epitomes of Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) and Ibn Qudāma (d. 689/1290) at its centre. He argues that their criticism of al-Ghazālī’s use of unreliable ḥadīth in matters related to virtuous acts (faḍāʾil al-aʿmāl) was among their main motivations for composing their texts.

In chapter 6, “Ḥadīth and Sufism in Ethical Discourse: Exploring ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī’s Conception of Taḥbīb,” Salahudheen Kozhithodi and Khairil Husaini Bin Jamil delve into the ḥadīth al-taḥbīb which reads: “I was made to love (ḥubbiba ilay) from your world; women and perfume, and I found the coolness of my eyes in the prayer.” They argue for the intertwinement of ḥadīth and Sufism as a mechanism for ethical discourse where Sufi ethics claim a scriptural foundation, as evident in the scholarship of ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166).

In chapter 7, "Seclusion: An Ethical Imperative Driven by the Ḥadīth," Mohammed Imran Khan explores ʿAbd al-Ghanī l-Nābulusī's (d. 1143/1730) seclusion (ʿuzla) in light of some of the moral and social dilemmas of associating with others. He argues that al-Nābulusī's concern for seclusion is justified by the ḥadīth traditions, and it is moral outrage which compels al-Nābulusī to write the tract as an ethical defence of his actions.

In chapter 8, "The Ethical in the Transmission of Sunna: Rethinking the ʿUlamāʾ-Quṣṣāṣ Conflict," Safwan Amir argues that the oft-neglected quṣṣāṣ (storyteller-preacher) played a vital role in directly conveying the Sunna to the larger public. He suggests that the quṣṣāṣ not only provide us with alternative histories to how knowledge was transmitted, taught, and realised in the Islamic tradition, but they also restore the fundamental idea of the ḥadīth as deeply intertwined with the ethical.

In chapter 9, "Abū Shuqqa's Approach to Ḥadīth: Towards an Egalitarian Islamic Gender Ethics," Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir tackles the question of how ḥadīths have been reinterpreted to explain Islamic egalitarian gender ethics, through an analysis of ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Muḥammad Abū Shuqqa's (d. 1995) Taḥrīr al-Marʾa fī ʿAṣr al-Risāla: Dirāsa ʿan al-Marʾa Jāmiʿa li-Nuṣūṣ al-Qurʾān wa-Ṣaḥīḥay al-Bukhārī wa-Muslim ("The Liberation of Women at the Time of the Message: A Study on Women Composed of Qurʾānic Texts, and the Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhārī and Muslim").

In chapter 10, "Islamic Ethics and the Ḥadīth of Intention," Ali Altaf Mian contextualises "the ḥadīth of intention" in order to demonstrate, in part, the salience of ḥadīth texts as important sources for the study of Islamic ethics. He relates this ḥadīth to three broader themes in Islamic ethics. In doing so, he problematises the binary of the inner (bāṭin) and outer (ẓāhir) and highlights the social dimensions of intention through the illustration of migration, which signals the public – and not merely private – nature of intentions. The chapter also considers the multiple valences of intention in everyday Muslim religiosity.

In chapter 11, “Consult Your Heart: The Self as a Source of Moral Judgment,” Mutaz al-Khatib explores the authority of the heart (qalb) as a potential locus of individual moral knowledge and normativity in Islamic ethics. To do so, he discusses two ḥadīths that ostensibly suggest that one’s “self” is a potential source of the moral judgment. He argues that although the Islamic legal tradition, as a discipline, has focused on qualified external actions of individuals and the ijtihād (independent legal reasoning) of mujtahids (jurists), it did not ignore the authority of the bāṭin over moral evaluation and the ijtihād of common individuals (ijtihād al-mukallafīn).

In chapter 12, “Muṣannafāt al-Muḥaddithīn fī l-Akhlāq: Kashshāf Awwalī” (“The Compendia of the Scholars of Ḥadīth on Ethics: A Preliminary Survey”), Mutaz al-Khatib presents a chronological bibliography of the key primary sources in the Islamic tradition with relevance to understanding the interplay of ḥadīth and ethics. The bibliography is preceded by an analytical introduction. This addition to the volume is meant to serve as a tool for future researchers to benefit from and build upon.

Although this volume is meant to provide theoretical foundations and insights about the study of ḥadīth as a crucial and rich source of Islamic ethics, there is a further thematic focus shared by various chapters, i.e., ethical subjectivity and relevant concepts such as intention, seclusion, noble virtues, taḥbīb, and consulting the heart.

The last editorial note I want to make here is that I have decided to pursue a systematic referencing to ḥadīth (takhrīj) and that is by referring to the book (kitāb) and the chapter (bāb). The purpose of that is not just for technical benefit and following the traditionists’ method but also to highlight the thematic relevance and the moral argument behind each title if any. <>

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