

# Studia graeco-arabica

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Submissions are invited in every area of the studies on the transmission of philosophical and scientific texts from Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and early modern times. Papers in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish are published. Prospective authors are invited to check the *Guidelines* on the website of the journal, and to address their proposals to the Editor in chief.

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*Studia graeco-arabica* follows a double-blind peer review process. Authors should avoid putting their names in headers or footers or refer to themselves in the body or notes of the article; the title and abstract alone should appear on the first page of the submitted article. All submitted articles are read by the editorial staff. Manuscripts judged to be of potential interest to our readership are sent for formal review to at least one reviewer. *Studia graeco-arabica* does not release referees' identities to authors or to other reviewers. The journal is committed to rapid editorial decisions.

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### *Cover*

Mašhad, Kitābhāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḡawī 300, f. 1v  
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, *grec* 1853, f. 186v

*Syriacis, Arabicis, Armeniacis Persicisque commentatio* (1842). Information is given also on the preparatory essays published before he submitted his *magnum opus* to the Académie Française, that in 1884 had launched a prize competition for the best work on Hebrew translations in the Middle Ages. It took forty years for Steinschneider to collect the data, from his early project to the submission to the Académie Française (pp. 14-18). The Introduction ends with historical details of great interest, and a portrait of Steinschneider's intellectual profile.

The part of *HUe* translated and updated in this volume is comprised of three introductory items: (i) Steinschneider's Introduction to the *Mémoire*, written in French, which was submitted in December 1884 to the Académie Française (pp. 37-42), (ii) the Preface to *HUe* (pp. 43-50), and (iii) its "General Remarks" (pp. 51-67). Then the translation of the part on Jewish philosophers comes (pp. 68-230), accompanied by an Appendix ("Conspectus of the Contents of *Die hebraeischen Uebersetzungen des Mittelalters*", pp. 231-42). The Index of manuscripts (pp. 243-6) and a General Index (pp. 247-55) concludes this first issue of a painstaking, erudite work that deserves the gratitude of all those interested in the transmission of knowledge from Antiquity to the Middle Ages and beyond.

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Khaled El-Rouayheb, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century. Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2015, xvi+399 pp.

For a long time, the intellectual life of the Islamic world in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was considered of little interest and typical of an age of stagnation and decline; in particular, as regards the Ottoman area, this epoch is commonly represented as the beginning of a long period of obscurantism and negative attitudes toward whatever original cultural phenomenon under the pressure of *taqlid* (uncritical imitation of the predecessors). Khaled El-Rouayheb's book is the first concrete attempt to investigate some of the intellectual currents of this period, in an area stretching from Anatolia to North Africa. The focus is on the intellectual outcome of the learned '*ulamā*' (treatises, commentaries, *marginalia*, etc.), in order to grasp the main trends in the exchange of ideas and transfer of knowledge within the geopolitical milieu of the Ottoman Empire. The book falls into three main parts, each devoted to a movement of ideas, so to speak: Part I, "The Path of the Kurdish and Persian Verifying Scholars", is comprised of Chapters 1-3, and deals with the "westward movement"; Part II, "Saving Servants from the Yoke of Imitation", is comprised of Chapters 4-6, and focuses on the eastward movement from the Maghreb towards the capital of the Ottoman empire; finally, Part III, "The Imams of Those who Proclaim the Unity of Existence", is comprised of Chapters 7-9, and is devoted to the spread of the influence of Sufi orders in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The overarching concern of this book is to deconstruct what El-Rouayheb calls "the myth of the triumph of fanaticism" (p. 14 and 348), namely the widespread idea that starting from the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century no more space was left in the Ottoman domain for the study of philosophy and the "rational sciences". This is done especially in Chapter 1, "Kurdish Scholars and the Reinvigoration of the Rational Sciences" (pp. 13-59), not without discussing the hostility to all rational sciences of the puritan movement initiated by Meḥmed Kāḏızade toward the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The famous scholar and librarian Kātib Çelebī complained on the sciences that sank into oblivion because of the increasing influence of the Kāḏızadelis; despite this, El-Rouayheb shows through a careful prosopographical analysis that during this period in the Ottoman world the study of philosophical and religious disciplines such as logic, theology and textual criticism has continued uninterruptedly and vigorously, and this especially in the Maghreb, Hejaz, and in the Kurdish provinces of the Empire. It is from these provincial areas

that many influential scholars moved to Istanbul, where they occupied prominent places in scientific institutions. The importance of these areas of the Empire is highlighted in Chapter 4, “Maghrebi Theologian-Logicians in Egypt and the Hejaz” (pp. 31-72). Opposition to *taqlīd* and assessment of the necessity of *tahqīq* (verification) as the basis for assent to the Islamic faith seem to inspire scholars like al-Sanūsī (d. 1490), whose works were destined to a long-lasting influence in the teaching tradition at al-Azhar (pp. 175-6). But al-Sanūsī is only the most prominent among a series of scholars whose accomplishments in the fields of theology and theologically oriented logic are described in Part II.

The work of Khaled El-Rouayheb also has the great merit of highlighting the existence of a real philosophical-theological *koiné* that in the 17<sup>th</sup> century stretched from the Mughal India and Safavid Persia to the Ottoman Anatolia and Maghreb.

Chapter 7, “The Spread of Mystical Monism” (pp. 235-71), and 8, “Monist Mystics and Neo-Ḥanbalī Traditionalism” (pp. 272-311) advance a very interesting perspective for further research: the influence of mystical monism “appears to have led to an assault on established Ash‘arī and Mātūrīdī theology in favor of more traditionalist, near-Ḥanbalī positions on a range of issues: the status of the ‘imitator’ in the Islamic creed; the value of rational theology; the nonliteral interpretation of apparent anthropomorphisms in the Quran and *hadith*; occasionalism and the creation of human acts; and the eternity of the sounds and letters of the Quran” (p. 350).

A deeply interconnected world emerges from this beautiful book, in which scholars and texts appear to move quickly beyond regional borders, reaching places far from each other and giving rise not only to original doctrinal approaches but also to new political theories based on them – theories which often provided doctrinal grounds to the political structures of the time. If he had included in the picture two foundational studies by Gerhard Endress, “Die dreifache Ancilla. Hermeneutik und Logik im Werk des Sayfaddīn al-Āmidī” (2005) and “Reading Avicenna in the Madrasa: Intellectual Genealogies and Chains of Transmission of Philosophy and the Sciences in the Islamic East” (2006), and if he had taken into account the studies gathered in the volume *Organizing Knowledge. Encyclopaedic Activities in the pre-eighteenth century Islamic World*, edited by the same scholar in 2006, he would surely have contributed to tracing a new path in this map.

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