

great and the great small,” calling him even “one of the biggest liars of the community” (*Kitāb taʿwīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*, ed. M. Z. al-Najjār [Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1393/1972], 59–60; see also my “Praise to the Book! Al-Jāhīz and Ibn Qutayba on the Excellence of the Written Word in Medieval Islam,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 31 [2006]: 125–43, esp. 133). Although expressed as disapproval and criticism, these words also serve to underscore yet again both al-Jāhīz’s great passion and his lasting impact as a littérateur and scholar who, on the one hand, voiced ideas of the political and cultural elite and, on the other, crossed swords in debate with the leading religious and intellectual figures of his day. Thus, *In Praise of Books* not only takes a very welcome fresh look at al-Jāhīz’s world of ideas, but perceptively uncovers arguments, beliefs, and values that characterize ninth-century Arabo-Islamic intellectual culture at large.

As Montgomery himself admits (p. 175), certain passages may make “too many demands” on the patience of his readers. He sometimes follows paths that “make for tough going” or may lead to a point that “forces [the reader] back to the beginning” of the argument. These observations, however, have perhaps less to do with Montgomery’s style of writing, which is admirably engaging, than with his very close reading of al-Jāhīz—a fascinating classical Muslim scholar who, in his day, “perceives the cohesiveness of his society to be endangered” and “presents *The Book of Living* as the way to preserve that cohesiveness” (p. 176).

SEBASTIAN GÜNTHER  
UNIVERSITY OF GÖTTINGEN

---

*Doubts on Avicenna: A Study and Edition of Sharaf al-Dīn al-Masʿūdī’s Commentary on the Ishārāt.* By AYMAN SHIHADÉH. *Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science, Texts and Studies*, vol. 95. Leiden: BRILL, 2016. Pp. viii + 289. \$126, €97.

Because of—not in spite of, as one might imagine—its complex, and even somewhat enigmatic, character, *Ishārāt* became in the later Islamic tradition the most commented, and hence most successful, text of Avicenna’s rich oeuvre. The oldest extant commentary, unedited until now, is *al-Mabāḥiṭh wa-l-shukūk ‘alā Kitāb al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt* by Sharaf al-Dīn al-Masʿūdī (fl. twelfth century). As becomes evident from Ayman Shihadeh’s study, its significance surpasses the simple fact of being the “first” of a long series of commentaries. Before dealing with the study, however, I turn to Shihadeh’s critical edition of the text.

Sharaf al-Dīn’s commentary is preserved in four manuscripts—three in Istanbul (Hamidiye 1452, Ayasofya 4851, and Pertev Paşa 617) and one in Shiraz (Madrassa-yi Imām-i ‘Aṣr [no number]). Shihadeh offers good evidence for not recording variants specific to the Ayasofya and Pertev Paşa manuscripts: they both appear to be—apparently independently of each other—copies of the much older Hamidiye manuscript. He also justifies why he does not treat one of the two remaining manuscripts as a base text, but simply collates them. Because of the presence of two marginal notes and an insertion, he believes that the copyist of the Ayasofya manuscript collated his copy with a holograph (pp. 170–71). Although I do consider plausible, as Shihadeh argues, that the insertion (fols. 135b–136a) is based on Sharaf al-Dīn’s autograph, in spite of there being no explicit mention of this in the Hamidiye manuscript, his claim that the insertion replaces a long omission and is hence an indication that Sharaf al-Dīn revised his original work, requires further investigation. According to Shihadeh (p. 255), the insertion does not fit the context. Since it starts in the middle of a sentence, it is reasonable to suppose that it follows the expression *fa-maʿnāhu al-mulakkhaṣṣanna* of the text (p. 254, 11), in which case the author’s suggestion of a different version is undoubtedly plausible. However, one would still expect the omitted section to end on line 2 of p. 258, since the beginning of line 3 (*fa-in . . . dhatān*) is clearly needed to maintain the coherence of the exposition. Moreover, the insertion is presented as a “correction” (indicated by a triple *ṣahḥa*). Finally, central to the insertion is the notion of nonbeing (*adam*), namely, the nonbeing of the need for a cause, whereby it is stressed that pure nonbeing does

not possess any cause whatsoever, and this idea has been explicitly expressed before (p. 253,3). A possible alternative to Shihadeh's hypothesis is that before the text of the insertion, a sentence introduced by *qawlukum* has fallen away, affirming that the notion of necessary being excludes nonbeing (p. 253,1–3: *wājib al-wujūd . . . 'adam*), which is then followed by the formula *fa-ma'nāhu al-mulakkhaṣanna*. The omission of this sentence is best situated immediately after the question of lines 8–9. The actual *qawlukum* of l. 10 (which introduces a paraphrase of an affirmation offered p. 252,1–3) would, if my speculation is correct, constitute a further development; although it looks indeed as if it overlaps with the text of the insertion, it in fact no longer focuses on the idea of nonbeing but on the question of the impossibility, or not, of there being a concomitance between the necessary being's existence and its being specific. Finally, I wonder whether the longer omission (related to pp. 254,11–258,3) did not happen by accident in the holograph due, e.g., to the loss of a folio. If so, then only the minor revision of five words (related to p. 253,4–5) is indicative of a real, albeit minor, revision by Sharaf al-Dīn.

For the quotations of Avicenna in *Ishārāt*, Shihadeh indicates all the variants with Avicenna's text as edited by Sulaymān Dunyā (although Shihadeh lists the first edition, which is four vols. in three, the referenced pages correspond with the four-volume second edition [Cairo, 1968–71]). This is a somewhat regrettable choice since Dunyā's edition is clearly inferior to either that of Jacques Forget (Leiden, 1892) or of Mojtabā al-Zāre'ī (Qom, 1423 [2002]). When one collates Sharaf al-Dīn's citations with these two editions, which have many readings in common that differ from Dunyā, the number of variants is drastically reduced. This is also the case for a few variants that have escaped Shihadeh's attention, as can be illustrated by the reading of *al-ḥayawān* (p. 205,3), also thus in Forget's and Zāre'ī's editions, but as *al-insān* in Dunyā's edition. Moreover, twice where Sharaf al-Dīn's quotation has a wording that significantly differs from Dunyā's edition—at the beginning of sections 8 and 14—and is described by Shihadeh as an improvement, the wording conforms with the editions of Forget and Zāre'ī. On the other hand, Shihadeh's correction (p. 205,7) of *ka-mā* (thus in both manuscripts used for his edition) to *kullamā* is corroborated in Dunyā's and Zāre'ī's editions and is from a doctrinal point strictly required, but the reading *ka-mā* is found in Forget's edition without any variant in the apparatus. All in all, there are only a few cases where a reading is not covered by any of the three editions, e.g., the omission of *aw bi-l-tafrīq* (p. 275,5), which looks justified insofar as the expression *aw bi-l-tafrīq* seems not to refer to a third alternative, but to a further subdivision of what in the passage is labeled "the constituents" (*muqāwimāt*). Shihadeh's preference for a specific reading of one manuscript over another almost always offers the better (and often the only valuable) reading. Only rarely is his preference open to question, as, e.g., p. 216,16, where he opts for the reading *aw*, present in the Istanbul manuscript, but where I think the reading *wa-*, as given in the Shiraz manuscript, is to be preferred—one has then a double specification of the eye, as *ālatuka* ("your instrument") and as *al-quwwa l-bāṣira llatī fihā* ("the power of vision in it [sc. the eye as your instrument]"). (In a personal communication, Shihadeh told me that his reading *aw* is based on Sharaf al-Dīn's desire to emphasize the fragmentary and modular nature of Avicenna's account of perception.) However, none concerns an essential issue. All in all, Shihadeh has produced a very trustworthy and readable edition of this text. His work is that of a pioneer and in this respect it only evokes admiration.

In addition to the edition proper, Shihadeh offers a long introductory study (pp. 1–194). It opens with a chapter in which Sharaf al-Dīn's life and works are presented, sketching as well the broader historical context in which his commentary on *Ishārāt* is situated. Given that the available evidence is rather slim, Shihadeh provides with due prudence the most significant data of Sharaf al-Dīn's life, stressing inter alia that the biographical report regarding his philosophical studies as given by al-Ṣafādī cannot be trusted. Shihadeh lists ten titles for Sharaf al-Dīn's works: two on general philosophy (in fact, commentaries on Avicenna's *Ishārāt* and *al-Khuṭba al-gharrā'*—Shihadeh briefly surveys the latter's major doctrinal issues and shows that it is a "neutral" presentation of Avicenna's tract); five on scientific topics, two dealing with logic; and one with jurisprudence. (Regarding one of the logical treatises, *Risālat al-Mukhtaliḡāt*, Shihadeh offers a list of explicit references therein to earlier works, among which Avicenna's *Ishārāt*. In addition to these, I found a reference to Avicenna's *al-Awsaṭ li-l-Jurjānī*—title as given in the manuscript = An. 45/Mehd. 108—see N. Pourjavady, *Majmū'ah-ye falsafī-e Marāghah* [Tehran, 1380 (2001)], fol. 313).

In the second chapter, Shihadeh begins by explaining how an aporetic commentary such as Sharaf al-Dīn's on *Ishārāt* differs from an exegetical commentary such as Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's commentary on the same text. (In the discussion of exegetical commentaries, Shihadeh mentions an edition of part of a commentary on Avicenna's *Najāt* but omits details; the correct reference, which he has now provided, is Fakhr al-Dīn al-Isfarāyīnī al-Nīshābūrī, *Sharḥ Kitāb al-Najāt li-Ibn Sīnā: Qism al-Ilāhiyyāt*, ed. H. N. Iṣfahānī [Tehran, 1383 (2004)].) He then outlines a basic doctrinal summary of the commentary under review, which is a most useful guideline for the reader. Finally, he asserts that Sharaf al-Dīn's toolkit is thoroughly philosophical, but that his commentary "exhibits much of the non-conceptual, dialectical vocabulary and argumentative structure and tactics characteristic of earlier *kalām*" (p. 79). Shihadeh points to the influence of Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī's *Mu'tabar* on the sections dealing with natural philosophy and of al-Ghazālī (especially his *Tahāfut*) on the sections dealing with the ontology of the soul and with metaphysics. Most significantly, Shihadeh concludes (p. 85) that for Sharaf al-Dīn philosophy need not clash with the teachings of revelation, but it requires that aspects of Avicennian doctrine be critiqued and alternative philosophical views developed.

In four subsequent chapters, Shihadeh then examines in detail four major doctrinal issues: (1) efficient causation and continued existence (Problem 9); (2) the ontology of possibility (Problems 10 and 14); (3) Avicenna's proof of the existence of God (Problem 7); and (4) matter and form (Problem 1).

Regarding (1), Shihadeh sharply contrasts Avicenna's "essential origination" with *kalām*'s "temporal origination," which prevailed in two different versions: the Bahshamī, which claimed that once a thing has come into existence through its cause, it need no longer have any other cause for its continuation, and the Ash'arī (accepted by al-Ghazālī), which claimed a continually renewed causal action (of God) for a thing's continued existence. In rejecting Avicenna's notion, Sharaf al-Dīn is more in line with the Bahshamī view, although he disagrees with it on many fundamental questions, such as what an accident is. More importantly, according to Shihadeh, Sharaf al-Dīn's criticism of Avicenna was influenced by al-Ghazālī's "theological" agenda. But given Sharaf al-Dīn's radical rejection of al-Ghazālī's occasionalism, the evidence for such in my view is rather thin. As to Avicenna's own position, it should perhaps be stressed that only God appears in it as a true metaphysical efficient cause, i.e., the one that gives "being," whereas the "Giver of forms" (who, however, is only mentioned once in this sense in the complete *Ilāhiyyāt* of *Shifā'*) can only be qualified as such in a "weakened" sense. Nonetheless, Shihadeh stresses correctly that for Avicenna a cause always exists together with its effect.

Great attention is paid to (2), Avicenna's ontology of possibility and Sharaf al-Dīn's objections against it. This is a particularly difficult topic and it is obvious that Shihadeh has made a great effort to understand both. Of interest is his distinction between "possibility in se" and "dispositional possibility" in Avicenna's doctrine, although it was inspired, as he admits, by the later tradition, especially Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī. Shihadeh allows that Avicenna never uses this terminology, but asserts that the distinction is implied. He bases his interpretation mainly on IV,2 of *Ilāhiyyāt* (ed. Anawati and Khodeiri [Cairo, 1960], 1: 177,6–12). In this passage Avicenna distinguishes between two fundamental senses of possibility: one related to the subject (Shihadeh's "dispositional possibility") and another that includes that for the possible itself it is possible to be and not to be (Shihadeh's "possible in se"). Regarding the latter, Avicenna makes a further distinction between something subsisting (*qā'imān mujarradan*), and something existing in something other than it. How one understands this depends on how one interprets *mujarradan* in *qā'imān mujarradan*. One possibility, as upheld by Shihadeh, is to render it as "abstracted (from matter)" (cf. O. Lizzini's *astratto* [Milan, 2002: 395], and G. C. Anawati's *dépouillée* [Paris, 1978: 220]). If this is correct, one must admit with Shihadeh that the discussion of the possibility of pre-existent entities is of little relevance to the discussion of potentiality in Avicenna and that the discussion in *Ilāhiyyāt* is limited to the possibility of temporally generated things. However, it then looks as if one of Avicenna's most innovative ideas—the qualification of all eternal beings, both immaterial (i.e., the Higher Intelligences and the celestial souls) and material (i.e., the celestial spheres, with the sole exception of God), as "possible"—has no real effect on how he articulates "possibility" in the supralunar world of generation and corruption. Moreover, Avicenna's idea of the immortality of the soul, despite its temporal origination, immediately becomes very problematic. Therefore, very plausibly, *mujarradan* is used here in the sense of "simply," as Michael Marmura translated it (Provo, UT,

2005: 136,10). Accordingly, Avicenna makes a distinction in the “possible in se” between substance and accident (in line with the categories) and omits any direct reference to “materiality” or “temporal origination.” But more research is needed to settle this definitively. As to the refutation of Avicenna’s view, Shihadeh argues that Sharaf al-Dīn was influenced by al-Ghazālī, who, however, countered Avicenna’s theory with a very different conception of possibility, as has already been pointed out by several scholars. It is striking that Shihadeh (in line with many scholars before him) identifies “they” in al-Ghazālī’s “The possibility they refer to reduces to a judgment of the mind” solely with Avicenna (p. 121). If that is the case, one must recognize that al-Ghazālī misinterpreted Avicenna. I wonder whether al-Ghazālī based his exposition on views of contemporary philosophers who belonged to the “Avicennan school” but had modified some of the eponym’s views—this might explain as well why al-Ghazālī’s formulation of the fourth argument in favor of the eternity of the world is inspired by but clearly not copied from *Ilāhiyyāt* or any of Ibn Sīnā’s other works. Whatever the case may be, Shihadeh has solid arguments to claim a profound Ash‘arī dimension in al-Ghazālī’s own conception of possibility; therefore, it cannot be considered novel. As for Sharaf al-Dīn, Shihadeh particularly emphasizes the former’s rejection of any rational, philosophical proof for the immateriality, self-subsistence, and immortality of the human soul. Their truth can only be established through revelation—in line, once more, with al-Ghazālī (and, through him, with earlier *kalām*).

Avicenna’s proof of the existence of God, based on the distinction between “necessary existent” and “possible existent,” is the topic of chapter five. Shihadeh is probably right in following Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s interpretation (with additional support in *Najāṭ*). However, al-Rāzī simply indicates the absence of important elements in Avicenna’s argumentation. This might give the impression of Avicenna’s weakness in logic, but has in all likelihood to do with the proper nature of the work itself, a kind of training book for students in philosophy. Shihadeh rightly notes that the argument in *Ishārāt* only shows that a series of simultaneous, not of temporally ordered causes must terminate in an uncaused cause. With regard to temporally ordered causes, Avicenna develops a specific argument in *Samā‘* of *Shifā’*, in which he states that what is true for the individual does not necessarily apply to the totality. Shihadeh judiciously remarks that al-Ghazālī uses this principle in his dismissal of Avicenna’s claim that a whole, each of which constituent units is possible, must itself be possible. Sharaf al-Dīn, in turn, does accept this Avicennan claim, but objects to another, namely, that an infinite series of possible things is a whole, each of whose constituent units is possible, which he contests Avicenna has not proven (p. 248,14–15). However, as Shihadeh observes, when Sharaf al-Dīn develops an *ad hominem* argument in support of his objection—although he fails here as he does not start from his opponent’s view, as required in an *ad hominem* argument (p. 155)—he takes over the two cases of the rotation of the heavenly spheres and of the infinite number of souls from al-Ghazālī but uses them with a new line of argumentation.

The last doctrinal issue (4) is the issue of matter and form, the subject of chapter six. Having summed up Avicenna’s view of body (the body is not corporeal on account of being material, but on the basis of its corporeal form), Shihadeh concentrates on the first *nama‘* of the second part of *Ishārāt*, where, after special attention to the sixth subdivision, titled *ishāra*, he detects the articulation of a proof that ultimately leads to the conclusion that body is a combination of prime matter and form. Given the absence of a conclusion, however, it was perhaps better termed an “unfinished proof.” This nonexpressed conclusion was found in the tenth subdivision, which in Shihadeh’s view (in accordance with Sharaf al-Dīn’s) refers back to the *ishāra*. However, the tenth subdivision is titled *tadhni‘*, which normally indicates that a theory has to be censured (see D. Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 2nd ed. [Leiden, 2014], 158). The theory that must be censured here appears to be the one that ignores, or denies, the existence of prime matter. This does not preclude cross-referencing it with the sixth subdivision, but this kind of cross-reference has in my view to be considered as part of the teaching strategy that is typical of *Ishārāt*. Shihadeh then presents Abū l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī’s radically opposed vision of prime matter being essentially corporeal and having continuous extension. He notes, following Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, that Sharaf al-Dīn accepts Abū l-Barakāt’s view, albeit without explicit acknowledgment (and after he had claimed that Avicenna’s proof fell short of its purported conclusion).

As far as I can tell, the English translation of quoted passages (from several works) is for the most part accurate. It is regrettable that Shihadeh (pp. 159, 165) translates *thakhīn* (solid, dense) as “three-dimensional” without explanation (in a private communication Shihadeh explained that *thakhīn* expresses the third dimension, i.e., “depth,” and is used here by Avicenna as a kind of abbreviation for expressing the two other dimensions as well. However, Avicenna normally uses *‘umq* to designate the third dimension of “depth”). Another small quibble is the use of the same translation for different terms, e.g., “fragmentation” for *infikāk* (pp. 159, 165, first occurrence) and for *tafriq* (p. 165, second occurrence). The use of an alternative translation for one, e.g., “partition,” would have made the difference in vocabulary in the original all the more clear.

This volume is an important contribution to a better understanding of the development of philosophy in the Islamic world of the twelfth century. We now have at our disposal an excellent edition of a text that had only been available in manuscript, as well as a valuable study that situates it in a broader framework and highlights a few of its major doctrinal views. Some topics still require scrutiny, but Shihadeh has given us a serious basis for further research.

JULES L. JANSSENS  
KU LEUVEN

---

Muḥammad Amīn b. Mīrẓā Muḥammad Zamān Bukhārī (Ṣūfīyānī), *Muḥīṭ al-Tavārikh* (*The Sea of Chronicles*). Edited by MEHRDAD FALLAHZADEH and FOROGH HASHABEIKY. Studies in Persian Cultural History, vol. 4. Leiden: BRILL, 2014. Pp. ix + 112 + 388 (Ar.). \$216, €167.

*Muḥīṭ al-tavārikh* (The sea of chronicles) is a general history (that is, a history of Islam and Muslim dynasties since creation down to the author’s time), divided into ten chapters (sg. *bāb*). The final and most original *bāb* is dedicated to the history of the Ashtarkhanid dynasty in the city of Bukhara and its ruler Subḥān-Qulī Khān (r. 1680–1702) down to the year 1699, when, apparently, the author was in his sixties. The Ashtarkhanids, also known as the Janid or the Tuqay-Timurid dynasty (depending on scholars’ view of the dynasty’s founders or point of origin), ruled parts of Central Asia from the cities of Bukhara and Balkh during the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries. They promoted and patronized considerable historical writing, mostly in the Persian language, and the work before us is both a characteristic and an unusual example of that patronage.

The study of Central Asia’s history, particularly of the period between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries, still suffers from a dearth of scholarly interest, and the majority of our written evidence for that time frame is scattered in archives throughout Eurasia, unedited and unpublished. And yet, in recent years we see growing—and laudable—efforts to publish text editions of both narrative and documentary sources from that era, efforts that have been undertaken mostly by Japanese, Uzbek, Kazakh, and Iranian scholars, displaying impressive international collaborations. Probably the most notable recent publication of this type is Mansur Sefatgol’s edition of *Tuḥfat al-khānī*, an important eighteenth-century Manghit chronicle, published in Tokyo in 2015. Indeed, institutions such as the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa affiliated with Tokyo University of Foreign Studies or the Department of Islamic Area Studies at the University of Tokyo; Daik Press in Almaty, Kazakhstan; the al-Beruni Center for Oriental Manuscripts at Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies in Uzbekistan; Miras Maktoob Research Center in Tehran; the International Institute for Central Asian Studies in Samarkand, and others have been actively contributing to this wider endeavor. To these we may add materials published in India, mostly related to Mughal history, that also concern Central Asia, directly or indirectly, during the centuries discussed here (for example, recent publications at Rampur Raza Library include the *Divān* of Zāhīr al-Dīn Muḥammad Bābur).

This edition of *Muḥīṭ al-tavārikh* appeared in Brill’s Studies in Persian Cultural History, an important series that typically does not publish text editions. The editors, Mehrdad Fallahzadeh and Forogh Hashabeiky of the Department of Linguistics and Philology at the University of Uppsala in Sweden,