

value here, including historians of late antiquity, early Islam, and Byzantium, as well as specialists in the history of iconoclasm and liturgy.

JOHN C. LAMOREAUX  
SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY

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*Opposition to Philosophy in Safavid Iran: Mulla Muḥammad-Ṭāhir Qumī's* Hikmat al-ʿArifin. Edited by ATA ANZALI and S. M. HADI GERAMI. Islamicate Intellectual History, vol. 3. Leiden: BRILL, 2018. Pp. ix + 56 + 402 (Ar.), illus. \$138, €119.

A bigoted cleric famous—or notorious—for his anti-Sufi writings and activities, Muḥammad-Ṭāhir Qumī held office as chief jurist, or *shaykh al-islām*, in the shrine city of Qum for much of the last two-thirds of the seventeenth century. Qumī's life and long career are shrouded in obscurity, as acknowledged in the introduction written by Ata Anzali for the volume under review. Qumī's dates are given only in ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Khātūnābādī's (d. 1105/1694) annalistic universal chronicle, *Waqāyīʿ al-sinīn wa l-aʿwām*. This source has unfortunately escaped the editors' attention. Instead, a late nineteenth-century biographical dictionary is referenced (p. 51, citing Muḥammad-Bāqir Musavī Khʿānsārī, *Rawżāt al-jannāt fī aḥwāl al-ʿulamāʾ wa l-sādāt*, ed. A. Ismāʿīlīān, 8 vols. [Tehran: Maktabat Ismāʿīlīān, 1391], 4: 143–46); this compilation contains no dates for Qumī, however. From Khātūnābādī (ed. M.-B. Bihūdī [Tehran: Kitābforūshī-i Islāmiyya, 1352sh/1973], 546), who seems to have known Qumī in person, we know that he died a centenarian in 1100/1689.

Further biographical evidence contextualizing Qumī's life and works can be gleaned from his own writings as well as from the works of his enemies and contemporaries. These latter sources include three unpublished treatises dating from the 1670s–80s, which have been overlooked by the editors of the book under review. A native of Bavānāt, a rural townlet some 140 miles northeast of Shiraz, Qumī started his schooling in his late teens and eventually ended up in the shrine cities of Arab Iraq, where he completed his studies to become a *faqīh*, or jurist. One of his detractors, a court physician in Safavid Iran named Muḥammad-Muʿmin Tunkābunī, claimed that Qumī had been indoctrinated into Sufism during his stay there. After completing his studies in the shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala, Qumī moved to Ottoman Baghdad, where he frequented the residences of local European Christian missionaries. There he witnessed with dismay and resentment European missionaries' success in converting numerous dervishes and mystics to Christianity. It was this experience that made Qumī fiercely opposed to mysticism in particular and any form of non-Sharia-minded religious inquiry in general.

Upon his return from Arab Iraq, which is datable to the mid-1630s, Qumī started posthaste his attacks on exponents of the so-called *ʿirfān*, a highly eclectic brand of mysticism that incorporated diverse elements from illuminationist (*ishrāqī*) philosophy, Nuqtavi/internalist (*bāṭinī*) millennialism, and Twelver Shiʿism. Qumī initiated his anti-Sufi campaign from Qum, where he persecuted and eliminated local circles of mystics and dervishes with success. He reached the apex of his power during the last two decades of the reign of the Safavid Shah Sulaymān (r. 1077–1105/1666–94). Throughout those years, as a contemporary court chronicler points out, the Safavid ruler “let the curtains of isolation and retirement drop down separating him from involvement with the pillars of the state.” Subsequently, an era of chaos and turmoil was ushered in during which “the good and the bad, the well-off and the wretched . . . suffered likewise as savagely as possible” (Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Naṣīrī, *Dastūr-i shahryārān*, ed. M. N. Naṣīrī-Muqaddam [Tehran: Bunyād-i Mawqūfāt-i Afshār, 1373sh/1994], 7–8).

Amid the state of political *saue qui peut* that engulfed Safavid Iran during the closing quarter of the seventeenth century, Qumī raised a militia of several hundred loyal guards from among the Arab nomads of the Qum region and entrusted them with policing and enforcing the religious law in the shrine city. Before long, these nomads become engaged in money-making. With Qumī's consent, they charged the well-to-do families of Qazvin, Gilan, Rayy, Sava, Tehran, and Kashan hefty sums to perform the perilous *hajj* pilgrimage on their behalf. Qumī is also reported to have arranged for his private

militia to obtain a large fraction of the fees earned by local prostitutes, whose commercial sex work he had legalized as short-term marriage (*mu'ā*). The police raised and trained by Qumī guarded the gates of Qum. They had been instructed to question every newcomer in the city about their religious views vis-à-vis Sufism and philosophy. The militia loyal to Qumī had reportedly been given a list of past and present Sufis and philosophers, whom Qumī disparaged as “apostate dogs,” to be cursed publicly during every Friday prayer he led. His *akhbārī* leanings notwithstanding, Qumī held the reins of governance as the deputy of the Hidden Imam, appointing a number of his disciples and former pupils to leading administrative and religious positions across the province of Persian Iraq (for more on his life and activities, see my “Bardāshthā-yi ṣufiyān az qudrat-i fuqahā’ dar Īrān-i avākhir-i sadah-yi 11/17,” *Žamīma-yi Majalla-yi Dānishkada-yi Adabiyāt va ‘Ulūm-i Insānī-i Dānishgāh-i Firdawsī-i Mashhad* 5–6 (1383sh/2005): 103–53, at 119–34).

None of the above is taken into account in the introduction to Qumī’s *Ḥikmat al-‘arīfīn*. Disregarding details of Qumī’s power grab and reign of terror in Qum during the chaotic years of the reign of Shah Sulaymān, the introduction eulogizes his recourse to such tactics as thuggish bullying and systematic harassment of ideological minorities as “a testament to his talents for navigating the socio-political landscape of Safavid Persia, which he did without having the advantage of being connected to prominent ‘ulama families of the time” (p. 17). The chief merit of the introduction lies in its synoptic coverage of *Ḥikmat al-‘arīfīn*’s contents. The significance of the work is emphasized as the “first monograph of the Safavid period dedicated to criticizing mainstream philosophy and Ibn ‘Arabī’s school of philosophical mysticism from a Shī‘ī-Akhhārī perspective” and “the earliest work of its kind to single out Mulla Ṣadrā and his philosophy as a primary target” (p. 34).

Qumī’s anti-philosophy discourse in *Ḥikmat al-‘arīfīn* is characterized as covering two main subjects. First, he is bent on laying bare the weaknesses intrinsic to philosophical methods of proving God’s existence focusing on the works of four illuminationist philosophers, Mullā ‘Alī Qūshchī (d. 782/1380), Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Davānī (d. 908/1502), Ghiyāth al-Dīn Maṣṣūr Dashtakī (d. 942/1535), and ‘Abd al-Razzāq Lāhījī (d. 1072/1661). Much of the rest of Qumī’s polemic is devoted to questioning the merit and relevance of mystical and philosophical perceptions of God’s knowledge. However, the editors fail to place Qumī’s anti-philosophy discourse in its proper historical context; *Ḥikmat al-‘arīfīn* is accordingly rated as a pioneering work of immense scholarship that had “significant bearing on the intellectual history of the Safavid period.” The fact is that Qumī’s refutation of philosophy in *Ḥikmat al-‘arīfīn* lacks both erudition and refinement. His attacks on philosophy often draw on falsifications stemming from his training as a *faqīh*, turning much of *Ḥikmat al-‘arīfīn* into a petty clerical polemic driven by its author’s political concerns and ambitions.

Internal evidence is used to conclude that he wrote *Ḥikmat al-‘arīfīn* late in the reign of Shah ‘Abbās II (1052–77/1642–66). It is thus no accident that in *Ḥikmat al-‘arīfīn* Qumī concentrates his attacks on Muḥammad Muḥsin Fayz Kāshānī (d. 1090/1680), Mullā Ṣadrā’s (d. 1045/1635 or 1050/1640) son-in-law and pupil and one of the most distinguished practitioners of transcendent theosophy (*al-ḥikmat al-muta‘āliya*) in Safavid Iran. During ‘Abbās II’s reign, Kāshānī’s star was in the ascendancy and he benefited from the Safavid ruler’s generous patronage. In 1067/1656f., ‘Abbās II invited Kāshānī to Isfahan and appointed him prayer imam at the city’s congregational mosque (Valī-Qulī Shāmlū, *Qiṣaṣ al-khāqānī*, ed. Ḥ. Sādāt Nāsirī, 2 vols. [Tehran: Vizārat-i Irshād, 1992–1995], 2: 39). Kāshānī’s pupils too were granted easy access to positions of administrative trust and political power. Toward the end of the reign of ‘Abbās II, for instance, Muḥammad-‘Alī Mu’adhdhin (d. 1072/1662), an ex-Nuqtavi propagandist and a favorite pupil of Kāshānī’s, gained employment as superintendent of the shrine of the eighth Imam ‘Alī al-Riḍā in Mashhad. Soon after arrival in Mashhad, Mu’adhdhin is reported to have started teaching courses in philosophy while presiding over a Sufi covenant in the shrine city. Qumī’s *Ḥikmat al-‘arīfīn* can accordingly be seen also as a rebuke of ‘Abbās II, who distanced himself from the anti-Sufi and anti-philosophy measures taken by his father, Shah Ṣafī (r. 1038–52/1629–42), and elected to become close to Sufis, Nuqtavis, philosophers, and even Christian missionaries in Isfahan. It is unfortunate that the introduction to the volume ignores these trends and events so as to place *Ḥikmat al-‘arīfīn* in its proper historical context.

The shortcomings and misunderstandings in the introduction notwithstanding, the quality of editing of the Arabic text, by Muhammad Hadi Gerami, is to be praised. He has done a tremendous amount of work to make the text accessible to a wider readership. The indexes are prepared meticulously and facilitate use of the edited text. All in all, Gerami's edition of *Hikmat al-ʿarifin* is a major contribution to the history of intellectual and political life in Safavid Iran.

KIOUMARS GHEREGHOLO  
NEW YORK, NY

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*The Shahnameh: The Persian Epic as World Literature.* By HAMID DABASHI. New York: COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2019. Pp. xvii + 249, illus. \$35.

As an undergraduate in the early 1970s, studying ancient Near Eastern and medieval European literatures, I once had a conversation about the *Shāhnāmeḥ* with the Iranian-Russian historian Firuz Kazemzadeh. When I asked him which translation I should read, he replied that I shouldn't bother. Not only did he consider Ferdowsī's poetry to be untranslatable—even learning Persian would hardly suffice. An entire mode of cultural experience, unknown in America, would be needed for a true appreciation of the epic's power; one should really be spending an evening with friends in a garden, listening deep into the night to an eloquent recitation. In his new book, Hamid Dabashi sets out to prove such views wrong.

Drawing on years of teaching the *Shāhnāmeḥ* in translation to his Columbia undergraduates, Dabashi offers an introduction to the epic for students and general readers. While he emphasizes the importance of historical and cultural context, he rejects the idea that the epic can be appreciated only by speakers of Persian or by area specialists. To the contrary, he argues that the epic's reception was long constrained by imperial and then nationalistic interests, and equally by Western philological approaches accessible only to specialists. Yet now the epic can find a new life as world literature in translation, as the field begins to expand beyond Europe and as the epic is neglected in postrevolutionary Iran and no longer serves the interests of the Ghaznavids, the Safavids, or the Pahlavis.

Dabashi presents the epic as a window into "a whole different *world*, in fact multiple *worlds*" (p. 17), both of its own time and then of the subsequent eras through which it has passed. He argues for the *Shāhnāmeḥ*'s renewed relevance in a postcolonial world, as "a renegade epic" (p. xi) that has always challenged the hegemony of any imperialism and any limited national identity. His first chapter discusses the epic's pre-Islamic and cross-cultural genealogy, focusing on the prominence of non-Persian characters and on recurrent failures of imperial ambition in a work "that at once sustains and dismantles any and all empires that come close to it" (pp. 45–46). Next comes a chapter on Ferdowsī's life and times, and then a chapter in which Dabashi charts the traditional division of the epic into mythic, heroic, and historical sections and summarizes several of the epic's most famous episodes, placing special emphasis on the heroic narratives. There follows an overview of the epic's reception in subsequent empires, and a chapter on its uses and abuses in the era of the modern nation-state. A conclusion returns to his argument that the *Shāhnāmeḥ* poses a fundamental challenge to Euro-American conceptions of world literature. As "a deeply subversive text" (p. 221), the *Shāhnāmeḥ* can play a key role in dismantling the "incurable parochialism" of "what today passes for 'World Literature'" (p. 204).

This is a highly personal book, warmly evoking the pleasures of reading and teaching the *Shāhnāmeḥ* while also sharply criticizing many area specialists, and the entire field of world literary studies, for having failed to give the epic its due or to see it as he does. Thus, scholars who explore the oral formulae detectable in the epic are not simply taking a different approach but are mounting "an insane assault" on the epic (p. 108). Against philological approaches in general, Dabashi claims that "[w]hat the poet actually sees and shows is far more important than what he hears and says" (p. 110), and he finds a better analog for Ferdowsī's artistry in the cinematography of Sergei Eisenstein and Akira Kurosawa than in Homer or Virgil. Emphasizing visuality over poetry, Dabashi evokes the great tradition of