

examination of a range of poetic aims and types of fine prose writing make this book an insightful and engaging contribution to research on Buyid court life.

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Islam and Its Past: Jahiliyya, Late Antiquity, and the Qur'an. Edited by CAROL BAKHOS and MICHAEL COOK. Oxford Studies in the Abrahamic Religions. Oxford: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2017. Pp. ix + 267. \$85, £65.

The idea for *Islam and Its Past* was formed at the conference of the same name held at UCLA's G. E. von Grunebaum Center for Near Eastern Studies in 2013. All eight chapters "are concerned directly or indirectly with the Islamic revelation, and for the most part this means the Qur'an" (p. 1).

Chapter one by Devin Stewart provides a brief survey of previous research in Quranic studies, starting from the translation of the Quran into Latin by Robert of Ketton. Stewart divides the history of Western Quranic studies into five periods: the twelfth to sixteenth centuries, the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, the nineteenth century to the Second World War, mid-twentieth century, and the late twentieth century to the present. He furthermore divides the field into three primary fields of inquiry: "investigation of the text," "history of its revelation," and "history of its recording."

Stewart begins by examining the approach of the "old Biblicists," the first Western scholars interested in the Quran. These scholars aimed to evaluate the development of early Islam through a comparative analysis of the Bible and the Quran, which offered the first deep analysis of hadith and exegetical literatures. Over the last three decades, the debate has often still focused on whether the Quran should be seen as entirely dependent on the Judeo-Christian scriptures or as an original and autochthonous product of Arabia. Those more inclined to the latter viewpoint often compare the Quran with material from the Christian tradition written in Syriac. Stewart labels this camp "New Biblicists." He further traces eight "influential trends" in current Quranic scholarship. Among these are "the extra-peninsularists or allohistorians," who prefer using "outside sources" to write the history of early Islam, and "the late antiquarians," who explore the rise of Islam within the broader framework of late antiquity by integrating it into the philosophical, artistic, and legislative framework of the period. Stewart also mentions "the sheepskinners, or the new textualists," who study the history of the Quran through an analysis of its sources, linguistic features, and the structure of the suras, and "feminist critics," who approach the reading of the Quran from a gender studies perspective.

In his final pages, Stewart encourages further attempts to translate both the Quran and nineteenth-century scholarship written in German, and expresses a desire for ideological openmindedness, better knowledge of the Arabic language in the West, and a greater awareness of medieval Islamic scholarship. He moreover exhorts his academic audience to engage in more multilateral discussion, particularly given that the field is rapidly expanding and more scholars are now approaching the Quran from a wide range of disciplines. Ultimately, despite the evident limits of putting different approaches into separate boxes, Stewart's chapter serves as a stimulating introduction to the work as a whole.

Chapter two, by Nicolai Sinai, deals with the editorial expansion of two suras traditionally dated before the *hijra*. He begins with some general considerations in determining whether a passage was secondarily incorporated into a sura, such as stylistic and lexical peculiarities and structural intrusiveness. He then briefly considers Q 74:31, before examining the tension between certain statements appearing in the opening verses of Q 5 and 9. Sinai deals with the position of verses in Q 5 that mention food taboos, ritual rules, and the relation between Muḥammad's followers and the People of the Book, and concludes that parts of verses 3, 4, and 5 were inserted at a secondary stage in order to abrogate previous prohibitions and clarify existing passages.

Sinai also claims that Q 9 polemicizes with "external opponents"—scriptural communities and associators (*mushrikūn*)—and with an internal group of "hypocrites" (*munāfiqūn*). He demonstrates

that the fifth verse of the sura, known as the Sword Verse, clearly conflicts with vv. 1, 2, and 4, which suggest different approaches for dealing with the *mushrikūn*, and concludes that textual strata were assembled in “a linear process of increasing mitigation” (p. 102). The chapter closes with a brief note on the reception of premodern Islamic commentaries and an encouragement to use them to understand the redactional history of the Quran. English translations, synopses, and redactional models of the analyzed passages are included in the appendix.

In the third chapter, Joseph Witztum casts light on another Quranic verse, 33:69. The passage, clearly dependent on the Judeo-Christian scriptures, invites believers to “be not as those who hurt Moses.” Witztum briefly surveys previous interpretations of the verse, including the classical commentaries, which accuse Moses of murdering his brother or of having intimate relations with a prostitute. Witztum then surveys the link between Q 33:69, which supposedly aims to reject any disapproval of the Prophet for marrying his daughter-in-law, and the attack on Moses’s Cushite wife in Num 12, a connection first hinted at by S. F. G. Wahl in 1828 and later examined in depth by Hartwig Hirschfeld in 1902. Hence, Q 33:69 draws a parallel with a noble biblical antecedent, that of Moses, to absolve Muḥammad of any criticism. Witztum also offers reflections on lexicological choices in this verse and two other passages (Q 66:1–5 and 24:11ff.) that deal with attacks on Muḥammad’s marriages. Both this and the previous chapter offer deep analyses of problematic Quranic passages and present their findings in persuasive fashion.

Chapter four, by the late Patricia Crone, explores the religious attitudes of Muḥammad’s “pagan Arab” opponents, the aforementioned *mushrikūn*. This group venerated lesser deities along with Allāh, and its members were therefore not polytheists *tout court*. The disputes between the Prophet and his opponents are attributed to a difference in perception of the figure of the Messenger, as well as of the concepts of resurrection and the Day of Judgment. Crone claims that the *mushrikūn* “were saturated with thought of Biblical origin” (p. 145), possibly due to the presence of Israelites (both Jews and Jewish Christians) in their locality. This thesis leads her to claim that the Arabs “related to the Israelites in the same way as did the gentiles known in antiquity as God-fearers” (p. 146). She thus considers this latter group as gentiles cautiously attracted to Jewish customs (the Christian God-fearers are deliberately ignored).

From a passage of Sozomen, which Crone recognizes as problematic, she concludes that there were God-fearers in northern Arabia “drawn to the Israelite religion on the basis of their kinship with the Jews” (p. 153). She thus proposes that the associators lived in a milieu rife with Jewish customs and that they even used to attend synagogue services together with the Jews. Despite recognizing a lack of archaeological proof for this imposing Jewish presence, she pushes her argument toward the identification of Muḥammad as a God-fearer at the beginning of his prophetic career. Finally, she stresses that the first converts to Islam did not abandon their own ethnic and religious communities.

Crone’s argument is suggestive, but has little support. This is evident from the fact that the minimalist monotheism of the Messenger’s opponents is explained through “his own polemical statements about them” (p. 140). Even the Quranic references are scanty, and the verses on the pagan Arabs from which Crone begins do not clearly mention the *mushrikūn*. Her argument furthermore does not make any distinction between the communities mentioned in the Quran. While echoes of different cultures and beliefs surely penetrated into the peninsula in the fifth and sixth centuries on account of the extensive flourishing of monotheistic movements, and while we might surely expect that the *mushrikūn* were familiar with Judeo-Christian preachings, none of this necessarily implies that the associators were attracted more to Jewish customs than to Christian ones. Moreover, the Quran itself suggests that the *mushrikūn* were merely blurred pagans who venerated Allāh. Overall, Crone’s approach tends to neglect the religious attitudes of the different communities who lived at the time of Muḥammad, specifically the Arabian milieu, presenting all unbelievers as Jewish sympathizers.

The fifth chapter is by Angelika Neuwirth and aims to highlight the role of early Islam in late antiquity, considering both the milieu in which the Quran arose and its prophetic literary genre, for “the task of positioning the Qur’an in Late Antiquity thus still waits to be accomplished” (p. 167). Starting from the consideration that there are “two rival canons, the Biblical and the Arabian” (p. 168), Neuwirth argues that the Quran appropriates biblical tradition and reshapes it according to Arabic patterns. This

is implied by the contents of the earliest suras, which strongly resemble biblical psalms while possessing some features present in the pre-Islamic odes (*qaṣā'id*). In the Meccan suras, this process is accentuated, and the Muslim community is presented as the legitimate successor of the Banū Isrā'īl (Israelites), as is evident from the mythopoeic re-creation of Abraham.

As Crone does, Neuwirth implies that there was a conspicuous Jewish community in the Hijaz able to influence the literary growth of the Quran and the elaboration of pillar stories such as the foundation of the Ka'ba, which aimed to construct Mecca as a new Jerusalem. She concludes her argument by suggesting that the Quranic reshaping of biblical stories was a reflection of late antique political elaborations of scriptural traditions. This creative rewriting entailed the extension of biblical topography into Arabia and Muḥammad's being made to resemble Abraham and Jesus.

Chapter six by Gerald Hawting further considers the influence of scriptural communities on early Islam, by focusing specifically on the idea of prophecy. Although three characteristic Arabian prophets are named, the Quran mostly presupposes knowledge of biblical prophets. As is often noted, the Muslim sources depict Mecca as a mainly pagan environment where prophets arose sporadically. Hawting argues that the traditional descriptions of pre-Islamic prophets developed to meet the needs of the later Muslim community. He thus analyzes the Muslim reports on the prophets of pre-Islamic times, dedicating a section to the "ridda prophets" who emerged after the Prophet's death. Hawting also places among them Muḥammad's rival Musaylima, supposedly active in Yamāma during the former's life. He further mentions prophets presumably active in pre-Islamic Arabia.

Hawting subsequently studies the prophets of the *fatra* (period between Jesus and Muḥammad), such as the Jewish Medinan Ibn Ṣayyād, depicted by the early Islamic tradition as the Antichrist in the wake of later apocalyptic concepts. In his conclusion Hawting doubts whether the contradictory testimonia on pre-Islamic prophets can clarify the rise of Muḥammad as a prophet. He argues that pre-Islamic prophets exist in the Muslim sources primarily to give emphasis to Muḥammad's career, or to suggest that his coming was awaited by the scriptural communities of Arabia, such as the monotheists (*ḥunafā'*). He concludes that we cannot reliably use the traditional Muslim sources in order to answer the question his title poses: "Were there Prophets in the *Jāhiliyya*?"

In the penultimate chapter, Michael Cook explores Christian and Muslim responses to pagan law under the monotheist dispensation in early medieval times. Discussing Salian Frankish law and early Germanic and Irish law codes, Cook tries to explain the accommodating attitude of Christians to pagan law. God's law was certainly not ignored, but many Germanic kings deferred to Christian Roman law as well. Cook suggests that this process was influenced by the concept of natural law developed by ancient philosophers. Nevertheless, he does not probe why exactly Christians adopted a concept suggested by pagan philosophers.

Pagan law is thus perceived by Christians as valid unless strictly incompatible with Christianity, and kings are free to modify God's law. On the other side, Muslims claim that Allāh has a monopoly of law-making, despite the existence of some pagan laws in the Islamic juridical corpus. It is worth noticing that these so-called pagan laws are defined as such by later Muslim tradition. We have no proof that the laws mentioned by Cook originated during the *Jahiliyya*.

Cook examines the re-elaboration of hypothetical pagan rules, such as compurgation. He argues that the acceptance of these supposedly pagan practices suggests the existence of (a) a sort of pride in the Arab *Jahiliyya*; (b) God's "pragmatism" as lawgiver; and (c) a monotheistic origin of pre-Islamic law. He connects the latter possibility to the Abrahamic descent of the Arabs. Nevertheless, because we have no archaeological sources proving belief in an autochthonous Abrahamic monotheism in pre-Islamic Arabia, using Muslim tradition as a historical source often raises more questions than it solves, as Hawting likewise argues. It is also problematic to define the "continuing pride in the *Jāhiliyya* as the ancestral past of the Arabs" as "Arabism" (p. 234). Is it possible to speak of the existence of a pan-Arabian population before the rise of Islam?

Finally, in chapter eight, Iwona Gajda presents some considerations on the rise of monotheisms in South Arabia. By examining new archaeological material, she reconsiders Ḥimyar's supposedly abrupt shift to monotheism, probably inspired by fourth-century Jewish traditions. Jews and Christians were certainly present in South Arabia at that time. The monotheistic creed adopted by the Ḥimyarite

kings was surely amply inspired by eclectic forms of Judaism, many of which would have probably seemed acceptable to the rabbinic authorities. Gajda demonstrates the coexistence of scriptural traditions (especially Judaism) and ancient pagan cults in the private sphere even after the Ḥimyaritic royal house's conversion, convincingly concluding that the shift was less abrupt than previously thought. The Ḥimyarite kings thus converted to a deliberately blurred monotheism, which made use of different names to indicate the monotheistic god in order to reinforce the unity of their South Arabian kingdom.

On the whole, *Islam and Its Past* offers important contributions to our understanding of the rise of Islam. Chapters two and three present innovative approaches to the study of the Quran and its relationship with the scriptural tradition. We might consider both chapters as the natural continuation of Abraham Geiger's experimental reading of the Quran. Chapters four and six, written by two of the most revolutionary students of the Quran, are groundbreaking and exciting. Nevertheless, their authors' arguments are based on traditional Muslim sources, which they themselves ferociously attacked in the 1970s; there is a desperate need for archaeological confirmation. Chapters one and five have a wider scope and provide instructive readings for those approaching the Quranic field for the first time. Finally, the final two chapters are intriguing, though in different ways. The erudition of chapter seven's author is undeniable, while chapter eight is relatively concise but has the merit of emphasizing the need for comparing and contrasting the archaeological remains of South Arabia with the relevant portions of the Quran.

Overall, the book is thought-provoking and sheds light on different aspects of current Quranic research. The general impression is that the field is booming at present, but that there are still many approaches that need to be investigated if we are to achieve a more rounded understanding of the Quran and early Islam.

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The World of Image in Islamic Philosophy: Ibn Sinā, Suhrawardī, Shahrazūrī, and Beyond. By L. W. C. VAN LIT. Edinburgh Studies in Islamic Apocalypticism and Eschatology, vol. 2. Edinburgh: EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2017. Pp. viii + 278. \$110, £75.

Given the clear description of the bodily resurrection during afterlife in the Quran on the one hand, and the prevailing idea of the sole survival of the soul in philosophy on the other, Muslim philosophers had to either renounce their religious beliefs or abandon their philosophical convictions. However, a solution for these seemingly incompatible views was elaborated in the Ishrāqī school. Its first explicit formulation, namely, “world of suspended images,” was related to al-Suhrawardī's acceptance of another world, different from the bodily world. After al-Suhrawardī, it found a more mature expression in the notion of “world of image” (*‘alām al-mithāl*), coined by his disciple al-Shahrazūrī. However, before al-Suhrawardī, Ibn Sinā had already posed a kind of preliminary basis for this idea—the possibility for souls to perceive images in the hereafter, thanks to a link with celestial bodies. The intention of L. W. C. van Lit's book under review is to highlight the crucial steps in the development of this theory, as well as significant elements of its reception in the later tradition.

In the introduction (chapter one), van Lit claims that the main focus of his book is on the notion of *‘alām al-mithāl*, its genesis, and its reception. He insists that he gives priority to al-Suhrawardī (and his commentators), although he had just before (rightly) criticized Henry Corbin (and others after him) for having used the expression *‘alām al-mithāl* in their discussion of al-Suhrawardī's thought. This is somewhat confusing, especially given the book's title, which seems to place al-Suhrawardī—and the expression—on the same level as Ibn Sinā and al-Shahrazūrī. The introduction offers a valuable survey of contemporary scholarship on al-Suhrawardī and discusses several methodological issues. Van Lit