

into account, so that the irony of the Joseph sura was more fully drawn out. (Irony is indeed a vehicle of anagnorisis.) At Q 12:31, Joseph's identity is (temporarily) further muddled (the more to set up the eventual master recognition scene) in one of the more powerful representations of (as it happens, false) recognition in the sura. This is when the ladies attending Zulaykha's salon are so bedazzled by Joseph's beauty that they falter, slicing their hands instead of the oranges they were peeling, and exclaim: "This is no man (*bashar*), rather a noble angel (*malak karīm*)." At Q 12:96, "the [anonymous] bearer of good news (*bashīr*)" brought Joseph's shirt to the languishing Jacob and, according to Joseph's earlier instructions, laid it upon his face that his sight be restored.

Vision is useful in the act of recognition, but it is not the only sense that can be used. In the several discussions of the verb *ʿarafa*, most frequently in tandem with its opposite and the other half of the distinctive "minimal pair" of Islamic language, *maʿrūf* and *munkar*, much of great value is learned about the various forms of the root and its basic relevance to the spirit and form of Quranic anagnorisis. One derivative of the root, however, is never mentioned, namely, *ʿarf* "scent." Though it does not occur in the Quran, it may be thought to waft into the story of Joseph on the wings of the word for scent that is used: *riḥ* at Q 12:94. The inevitable connection between knowledge and enlightenment and the "prophetic sense" of smell would thus be all the more emphasized.

One is mightily tempted to see Abū Zayd, the picaresque hero of the *maqāmāt* genre, as a personification—Kennedy would possibly prefer, synecdoche—for the wily, shape shifting, deceitful, truthful, complex, simple, simultaneously veiling and unveiling, sympathetic and hostile intellectual *organon* known as Arabic grammar. After all, his famous "son," the hapless, ubiquitous, and long-suffering Zayd of grammatical explication, is possibly the one most needful of deliverance from such unusually cruel pilpulistic manipulation (see p. 249). This striking and delightful recognition is a shining testament to the scholarship, knowledge, acumen, oceanic reading, and story-telling ability of the author; to the nature of Arabic and, as it happens, the centrality of the Quran to all literary and cultural endeavor pursued in the Islamic world; to an overactive readerly imagination on the part of this reviewer; or to a combination of all four. Whatever the case may be, it comes from this tremendous book, to which justice is not done here. *Uva uvam videndo varia fit*.

TODD LAWSON
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

L'Ésotérisme shi'ite: Ses racines et ses prolongements / Shi'i Esotericism: Its Roots and Developments. Edited by M. A. AMIR-MOEZZI, M. DE CILLIS, D. DE SMET, and O. MIR-KASIMOV. Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Etudes, sciences religieuses, vol. 177. Turnhout, Belgium: BREPOLS, 2016. Pp. v + 870. €95 (paper).

This most welcome volume, brought to dazzling fruition by the leading scholar of Ithnā ʿasharī ("Twelver") Shiʿism, offers the student of both Shiʿi and Sunni Islam a veritable cornucopia of riches concerning a topic still too little recognized and explored, particularly in English-speaking scholarly circles. It provides much new material destined to disturb our comfortable, not to say stale, notions of how the dynamics of communal identities have worked and continue to work themselves out in the case of Islam, a tradition for which it has long been accepted that the categories of "orthodoxy" and "heterodoxy" simply do not apply, but for which no reasonable alternate approach has gained universal traction. Marshall Hodgson's brilliant model of "styles of piety" has inspired two generations of Islamicists, yet seems for the most part to have remained something of an esoteric insight all on its own; those who share it congregate in something of a "spiritual and anonymous church." Further, this collection's topics and methods of exploration will also illumine problems of belief and doctrine with regard to sources and settings. How Sunni Islam is in some sense the creation of Shiʿism—and vice versa—and how their mutual study in contemporary scholarship is a non-negotiable desideratum are issues that receive much suggestive exposition in this book, though, it should be hastily added, this is

not its purpose. Nonetheless, the special symbiosis between Shi'ī and Sunni Islam emerges much more readily traceable as a result of reading this book. The new sources brought to bear here will vivify the conversation.

Only the briefest of surveys can be offered of the contents of this collection of learned articles and essays in French and English, thirty-five in all (fourteen in French, twenty-one in English) plus an introduction. The articles are divided into three major sections, indicated in the title of the book: Roots, Early Shi'ī Esotericism, and Developments. In the first section, nine of the eleven chapters are in French. The content of the first section may be outlined as follows: a contemplation of the origins of the twin phenomena, Islam and Shi'ī imamology (Amir-Moezzi); whether so-called *ghulāt* religion may be considered "Islamic gnosticism" (Asatryan, Burns); the docetic roots of Shi'ī imamology (De Smet); the figure of the prophet in the Manichean religion (Dubois); Jewish sources for the quranic angels Hārūt and Mārūt (Idel); the doctrine of the True Prophet in pseudo-Clementine writings (Le Boulluec); Platonism in Iranian Islam, according to Corbin (Marasecu); the theme of the soul's quest for its origins in early "Gnosticism" (Scopello); Barlaamian parables of absence in Mani and Ibn Bābūya (Tardieu); the Demiurge theme in the Hermetic corpus (Van den Kerchove); and the White Robe of the Servants of God as a theme in 'Adī b. Zayd, the Quran, Bardaisan, and al-Muqanna' (Van Reeth).

Section two contains twelve chapters, of which two are in French. Again: hadith literature among the Nusayris (Ansari); esoteric Shi'ism in additions to early manuscripts of the *Rasā'il* of the Ikhwān al-ṣafā' (Baffioni); a spiritual elect in Shi'ī and Sufi thought (Dakake); *qadā'* and *qadar* in Kirmānī's *K. al-Riyāḍ* (De Cillis); the *ghayba* of the Hidden Imam in the earliest surviving Twelver Shi'ī literature (Ghaemmaghani); the creation myth in The Book of Shadows (Halm); the microcosm/macrocosm analogy in the Ikhwān al-ṣafā' and medieval Jewish writings (Krinis); Shi'ī esotericism and alchemy in the Jabirian corpus (Lory); *al-jadd*, *al-faṭh*, and *al-khayāl* in Ismaili literature (Straface); the Nuṣayrī *Bāb* and 'Abd Allāh b. Saba' (Krieger); the *Kamāl al-dīn* of Ibn Babawayh (Vilozny); and "To What Degree was Classical Ismaili Esotericism Based on Reason as Opposed to Authority?" (Walker).

Section three—twelve chapters, of which four in French—begins with a study of the presence of Shi'ī esotericism in the thirteenth-century book of magic and lettrism by al-Būnī (Coulon) and is followed by: the theme of *ahl al-bayt* in al-Tirmidhī, Ibn al-'Arabī, and the Ikhwān al-ṣafā' (Ebstein); esotericism and neoplatonism in the exegesis of the Light Verse by Qāḍī Sa'īd Qummī (Jambet); what Hatayī says about Shah Ismā'īl's religious views (Karamustafa); "Mimetic Rivalry" with Avicennism in Shahrastānī's Esoteric Hermeneutics" (Mayer); esoteric messianism in Shi'ism and Sufism of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries (Mir-Kasimov); 'Alī in medieval Persian *futuwwat* works (Ridgeon); political theology and esotericism in Ja'far Kashfī (Rizvi); esoteric aspects of Ṭayyibī doctrine in a work by Ibn al-Walīd (Scotti); gnosticism in Alevi and Bektāshī syncretism (Stoyanov); anthropogony and eschatology in Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī (Terrier); and initiatic death in Alevism and Bektashism (Zarcone). The book ends with brief biographies of the contributors and a substantial index. Bibliography is given separately in each article and not collated at the end.

Among these articles, there are, of course, a few that stand out for elegance of conceptualization, clarity, and the creative use and mastery of sources. Those of Mohammad Amir-Moezzi, Daniel De Smet, Alain Le Boulluec, Michel Tardieu, Jan Van Reeth, Maria Dakake, Omid Ghaemmaghani, Michael Ebstein, Toby Mayer, and Paul Walker may be mentioned. But, without exception, each of the thirty-five chapters is a valuable contribution to the study of the history of Islam (and its quite legitimate iteration called here esoteric Shi'ism), its practices and beliefs, and the distinctive manner in which it supplied the raw material for the new religious identities that burgeoned in its path.

There is no room to explore the volume at hand at all sufficiently, but I would like to make three points that, to one degree or another, apply to the book as a whole. One, I would have liked to see more on lettrism: the working of a sacred language and alphabet to explicitly esoteric ends. Two, it is important to interrogate the term esoteric. Does it refer to the meaning of a scripture, say, for a secret or elite group? Or does it refer to the meaning of a scripture contrasted to the plain (cf. *zāhir*) meaning, which is theoretically accessible to all readers? Or is it something of a synonym for a specifically Islamic type of existentialism, identified and analyzed first by Henry Corbin, in which the terms of scripture apply precisely to the inner realms of the self (soul) and conscience of the human being, even if they

“appear” to be speaking about, say, the story of Moses? These options are not mutually exclusive, of course, yet a theoretical discussion of basic terms is only faintly discerned. Three, if we are to agree that there was an ebbing of Shi‘i, especially Twelver, esotericism with the advent of the development of “Sunni-esque” *fiqh* in the tenth to eleventh centuries, we would like to know more about why this happened. Could it have been that the now fully birthed Twelver community wished to emphasize, by choosing such a number, that they could thus never be confused with that other group claiming descent from *ahl al-bayt*, the Fatimids (aka the *bāṭiniyya*), who, as history tells, actually occupied Baghdad in 1065 where the Fatimid call to prayer was heard for nearly a year?

Esoteric Shi‘ism came first to be recognized as an academic pursuit under the heroic influence of Henry Corbin, who devoted five decades of his life to its study and produced a breathtaking number of editions of foundational if previously virtually unknown texts in Arabic and Persian, discrete studies in French of the problems and methods of approach and substance, anthologies of excerpts, general histories of “philosophy” (which, for Corbin, was virtually synonymous with esoteric Shi‘ism), taught six months in Paris and six months in Iran every year, guided numerous graduate students, Eastern and Western, to previously unknown stores of source material, and died the day Khomeini arrived in Paris as a refugee in order to mastermind the Iranian revolution from a safe aerie. It was Corbin, and no one else, who made a space for the study of Shi‘i esotericism—put it on the map, as it were (and not only in Western academe). Indeed, many of the principals in the present volume were his students. This is why Corbin’s name seems to be mentioned more often in the book at hand than either Shi‘ism or esotericism. It seems odd that the book is not dedicated to him.

TODD LAWSON
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Formation of a Religious Landscape: Shi‘i Higher Learning in Safavid Iran. By MARYAM MOAZZEN. Islamic History and Civilization, vol. 151. Leiden: BRILL, 2018. Pp. xiii + 290, illus. \$149, €129.

The conversion of Iran to Shi‘ism in the early modern period is one of the great developments in Iranian and Islamic history. It was under Safavid rule that Twelver Shi‘ism began this journey toward being Iran’s predominant religion, a position that was not achieved until the nineteenth century. Among the factors in bringing about this end was the work of Shi‘i ulama and Shi‘i educational institutions. Much research has been done in recent years on aspects of Safavid society, history, and culture. Moreover, considerable attention has been paid to Shi‘i intellectual history and the socio-political role of the ulama. But we do not know how Safavid madrasas worked, what their ulama taught, and how they may have advanced higher Shi‘i learning. It is the object of this book to fill this gap “by explaining the ways in which religious knowledge was produced, authenticated and transmitted in the second half of Safavid rule from the reign of Shāh ‘Abbās I (1585–1629) to the end of Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn’s era (1694–1722)” (p. x).

Moazzen begins by reminding us of the Safavid concern to introduce Shi‘ism to Iran and by surveying the recent literature on mosque-madrasas in the Islamic world in general. Referring to the work of Jonathan Berkey, Michael Chamberlain, and Daphna Ephrat, she reminds us that madrasas did not necessarily exist to systematize and professionalize Islamic learning as George Makdisi asserted, but might also have been sites to help an elite to legitimize its power, or to win the support of ulama, or perhaps to further a particular family agenda. With this warning ringing in our ears, Moazzen moves to considering the role of madrasa-building by the Safavid shahs and by wealthy individuals in consolidating Shi‘ism in Iran. In her first chapter she surveys the building of mosques and madrasas in Isfahan and argues that they were central to the conversion of Iranians to Shi‘ism, transmitting religious knowledge, promoting Shi‘i values, and supporting personal piety. Although she does not claim “that the madrasa was the most important reason for the final triumph of Shi‘ism over Sunnism in Iran, [she argues] that it certainly was one of the primary instruments for the firm establishment of Shi‘ism . . . and one that