

“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.

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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

has been largely overlooked” (p. 27). The argument is backed up by twenty-six color illustrations of the mosques and madrasas under discussion. In her next chapter Moazzen focuses in particular on the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī built by Shah Sulṭān Ḥusayn. She shows how this Shiʿi educational and charitable foundation was organized, the reasons given for its foundation, the forms of knowledge it transmitted, its religious activities, and the people it supported. We also learn much about the administration of the madrasa, the duties of its employees, and the living conditions of its students. She notes that “because members of the political establishment were typically founders of new madrasas, political ends were inevitably fused with religious values in the resulting endowed foundations” (p. 27).

In the remaining four chapters Moazzen broadens the scope of her study. Chapter three examines the wider cultural context of the madrasa. She asserts that they were not just about transmitting religious knowledge but “functioned as a multifaceted institution that served much wider goals.” Madrasas were sites where “Shiʿi cultural memory was constantly being reconstructed and re-read in the light of current circumstances, perceptions, and cultural memory.” The public remembrance of the deaths of the Imams that they supported “came to serve as a symbolic and moral resource for organizing and interpreting the Shiʿi community’s new experiences and for mobilizing it to face new crises” (p. 28).

After examining the concepts of knowledge of Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī (d. 1626) and Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1640), chapter four surveys the curriculum of the Safavid madrasas. Moazzen argues, unsurprisingly, that in the sixteenth century the Uṣūlī mujtahids were in the ascendant and controlled the direction of madrasas, but that in the seventeenth century they came to be challenged by Akhbārīs. Chapter five examines the actual process of teaching and learning. We are told that memorizing, reciting, discussion, dialectical disputation, and debating were all part of the process, as was learning how to write commentaries and glosses. There was a specific etiquette expected both of the teacher and the student. As always, travel in pursuit of knowledge was encouraged, and marriage discouraged, for the student at least, as bringing about the end of the serious pursuit of scholarship. There is little in the advice given here to distinguish teaching and learning in the Shiʿi context from that in the Sunni.

In her final chapter Moazzen examines criticisms of Shiʿi higher learning made by four scholars: Mullā Ṣadrā, the great Safavid philosopher; Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī (d. 1679), a famous hadith scholar; Muḥammad Bāqir Khurāsānī (d. 1679), the *shaykh al-Islām* of Isfahan and an eminent mujtahid; and Muḥammad Zamān Tabrīzī (fl. early eighteenth century), a well-known Safavid teacher. She notes that although all four scholars had different emphases in their scholarship, their criticisms of the scholarship of their time shared much.

[They] lamented that higher learning had been reduced to dry formalism and that many ignorant persons had been representing themselves as scholars in order to obtain status and wealth. They warned against what they saw as an ever-widening gap between true learning and the shallow and half-baked training that students received in madrasas. They believed that *ẓāhiri* (literalist) scholars were destroying the every essence of Shiʿism by reducing it to a mere corpus of legal minutiae and *ḥadīth* collections. (pp. 239–40)

In the way of scholars of all ages, seeing their ways being overtaken by new understandings, there was an element of “O tempora, O mores” in all of this. Nevertheless, Uṣūlī jurists were clearly discomfited by the ascendance of the Akhbārīs and by the emerging literalist scholarship. There was also an evident distaste for the rise of worldly ambition in the scholarly profession.

This is a work of considerable scholarship. It is based on many primary sources, for instance, “biographical dictionaries, autobiographies, *ijāzas*, deeds of endowment (*waqfiyyas*), chronicles and historical sources, European travelers’ accounts, anthologies and polemics written by Safavid ‘ulamā, administrative accounts and chancery literature, and works written by Safavid ‘ulama” (p. 24). All are supported by a notable command of the secondary literature in the field. The outcome is a book that, for the first time, tells us how Safavid madrasas worked, and what and how they taught. It is a considerable achievement.

As she travels her path, Moazzen sheds light on many matters great and small. I shall mention just three. The first concerns the stipulations regarding the borrowing of books from the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī library. These were written on the back pages of donated books and go to some lengths in setting out

the conditions under which a book might be borrowed and for how long. We are given a real sense of the librarian's struggle to control his stock. The second is the impact of the scriptural reliance emphasized by the Akhbārīs. This, Moazzen tells us, "gave lay people direct access to the most sacred texts and provided them with the possibility of individual interpretation" (p. 167), which was, of course, very much the impact of Islamic reform in the Sunni world with its renewed emphasis on the Quran and hadith. Especially in South Asia, but also elsewhere, it opened the door to individual interpretation. Thirdly, the rise of Akhbārism led to considerable discouragement of the Islamic rational sciences (*ma'qūlāt*). Ironically, this took place just when, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Iranian achievements in this fields were leading to a major flowering of *ma'qūlāt* scholarship in northern India.

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The Mystics of al-Andalus: Ibn Barraġān and Islamic Thought in the Twelfth Century. By YOUSEF CASEWIT. Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization. Cambridge: CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2017. Pp. xvi + 353. \$100, £95.

This long-awaited book is a most significant and welcome contribution to the study of medieval Islamic mysticism, particularly as it developed in al-Andalus. It will likewise be of interest to specialists in the field of Quranic Studies as well as to historians of Muslim Spain.

Abū l-Ḥakam ʿAbd al-Salām Ibn Barraġān of Seville (born ca. 450/1058, d. 536/1141) was a renowned mystic and eminent religious scholar in al-Andalus who mastered diverse disciplines, ranging from Quranic exegesis and variant readings (*qirāʾāt*) to Arabic grammar and poetry. He was a revered teacher who attracted many students; his writings played an important role in the development of Islamic mystical thought, Quran exegesis, and the science of hadith. Previous studies on Ibn Barraġān have typically presented a very partial picture at best of his life and thought, and often produced a distorted account of his place in the history of Islamic mysticism. This unfortunate fact stems from an over-reliance on biographical dictionaries and an incomplete reading of Ibn Barraġān's writings, which have remained until recent years in manuscript (pp. 1, 8–9). Misconceptions regarding the nature of Andalusī mysticism and its relation to Eastern Sufism have also hindered scholars from properly understanding and accurately contextualizing Ibn Barraġān's teachings. Yousef Casewit's book successfully corrects this situation: it is the first comprehensive study of Ibn Barraġān's life and thought, based on a close reading of all his works (in manuscript and print alike) and on an impressive array of other primary and secondary sources.

The book is voluminous, comprising eight chapters, not including the introduction and conclusion. These chapters can be neatly divided into two: the first four deal with Ibn Barraġān's life and works and their historical background, while the remaining four provide in-depth analyses of his teachings. More specifically, pp. 14–21 in the introduction and chapters one and two discuss the political, social, cultural, and religious history of al-Andalus that is relevant for understanding Ibn Barraġān's biography and intellectual-spiritual project. This discussion includes a wide range of topics, such as, inter alia, the "rise and demise" of the Almoravid regime, the history of renunciants and mystics in Muslim Spain, and their relations with rulers and state-sponsored scholars or jurists, which more often than not were quite tense. Much attention is naturally given to Ibn Barraġān's predecessor Ibn Masarra (d. 319/931) and to Ibn Barraġān's contemporaries Ibn al-ʿArīf (d. 536/1141) and Ibn Qasī (d. 546/1151)—all of whom were Andalusī mystics—as well as to the influence of the renowned al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) on their teachings and on the Andalusī intellectual scene in general. Chapter two ends with two additional discussions: one on the applicability of the label "Sufi" to the aforementioned Andalusī mystics, and the other on the development of "institutional Sufism" in the Maghrib, beginning with the celebrated Abū Madyan (d. ca. 594/117), several of whose teachers were disciples of Ibn Barraġān. The author's main claims regarding these various matters will be summarized below.