

with the Ottoman Empire and concluding with Iraqi post-occupation. Al-Ali employs personal observations made during his involvement with the 2005 political restructuring of Iraq's government, communications with key post-occupation Iraqi players, and a variety of public documents to shed light on a number of external and internal failures connected with the U.S. intervention. Topics include the influences of regional powers such as Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia, and the activities of local governments, tribes, and ethnic groups. The book concludes with a proposal for Iraq's future development. ✦

DOI:[10.1017/rms.2015.59](https://doi.org/10.1017/rms.2015.59)

Tina Homayoun
Virginia Tech

LINDA S. WALBRIDGE. *The Thread of Mu'awiya: The Making of a Marja' Taqlid.* Bloomington, IN: Ramsay Press, 2014. xix + 146 pages, foreword, glossary, bibliography, index. Paper US\$16.95 ISBN 978-0-6159-5756-2.

In this book, anthropologist Linda S. Walbridge examines the process through which a Shi'i religious cleric becomes recognized as a *marja' taqlid* (grand ayatollah), the highest authority on religious law under the Qur'an, the Prophets, and the imams. Based on multiple interviews with Shi'a clerics, the book offers readers a look into the complex political world inhabited by only a handful of scholars in the predominantly Shi'i cities of Iraq and Iran. Each chapter is devoted to a different *marja' taqlid*, with an exploration of his rise to the position, his various responsibilities (e.g., managing funds generated by religious taxes), and his various contributions to the community. Walbridge concludes with a discussion of the possible future of the position of grand ayatollah in both the Middle East and the Western world. ✦

DOI:[10.1017/rms.2015.60](https://doi.org/10.1017/rms.2015.60)

Katherine Talley
Virginia Tech

STEPHEN P. BLAKE. *Time in Early Modern Islam: Calendar, Ceremony, and Chronology in the Safavid, Mughal, and Ottoman Empires.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. xiii + 209 pages, acknowledgments, note on transliteration, bibliography, index. Hardcover US\$85.49 ISBN 978-1-107-03023-7.

Stephen P. Blake argues that from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries, most astronomical, astrological, and mathematical advances occurred within