

wealthy, often secularly educated segment, at the expense of the staff of religious institutions with meagre salaries.

Halevi has meticulously investigated the contexts in which the legal issues Riḍā was asked to address arose. This enables him to draw a lively picture of Islamic debates in the first third of the twentieth century. Moreover he has to a large degree himself investigated how the various “modern things” became known and how they were marketed in Egypt and other countries. Hence he not only weaves intellectual and economic history together but comes forth with a contribution that is as ground breaking and original regarding the development of a consumer culture as it is concerning legal reform.

These achievements notwithstanding, the general revision of Muslim attitudes to science, technology, and economy in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that Halevi claims to formulate in the Prologue and the Introduction is not warranted by his own account. He seeks to overcome the paradigm of Muslim opposition to technology, but whereas the openness of Riḍā and many of his “clients” to technology and capitalist modernization is undeniable, Halevi himself shows in many instances how these clients had to confront reluctant attitudes among scholars in their respective contexts. Hence, it is rather the contrast between the dominance of more conservative scholarly opinions and the desire of an emerging Muslim middle class for more pragmatic approaches that explain how Riḍā could attain his outstanding transnational position.

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FARID SULEIMAN:

Ibn Taymiyya und die Attribute Gottes.

(Welten des Islams – Worlds of Islam – Mondes de l’Islam.) xi, 388 pp.
Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019. €109.95. ISBN 978 3 11 062322 2.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X21000616

Recent decades witnessed a significant increase of research interest in the thought of the controversial Muslim activist, theologian and jurist Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328). Ibn Taymiyya, who was active in Mamluk Damascus, is considered to this day one of the most prominent authorities of Sunni Islam. The book under review is a welcome addition to the study of Taymiyyan theology, concentrating on the much-debated issue of divine attributes (*ṣifat Allāh*) in the Quran and *ḥadīth*. Ibn Taymiyya delved into this challenging issue throughout his many works, and it also stood at the centre of attention during the two public trials that the Damascene scholar endured, which resulted in two separate periods of imprisonment.

Although numerous studies have been written about divine attributes in Islamic theology, including Ibn Taymiyya’s unique approach, Suleiman’s is the first full-length study exclusively dedicated to the subject. Since Ibn Taymiyya’s teachings on the appropriate understanding of divine attributes are scattered across his oeuvre and are often articulated in a negative-polemical manner, Suleiman focuses on Ibn Taymiyya’s positive-constructive views as they appear in ten of his writings, which are briefly presented in section 1.3. According to Suleiman, only by considering the

works' context and chronology is it possible to explore Ibn Taymiyya's overall methodology in terms of its development (pp. 11–2).

The book comprises three main parts. The first includes two chapters and provides necessary background based on secondary literature. Chapter 2 offers a biography of Ibn Taymiyya, emphasizing his tense relationship with the scholarly and political elite of his time, mainly due to theological disagreements. Chapter 3 contains a succinct overview of the different viewpoints on the divine attributes which evolved in Islamic theology prior to Ibn Taymiyya, addressing formative Islamic theology and *Kalām*, Mu'tazilī allegorical interpretation, the views of the Muslim philosophers, the traditionalistic school of *ahl al-hadīth* – with which Ibn Taymiyya affiliated himself – and the later Ash'arī school. As Suleiman notes, it is primarily later-Ash'arīs (especially Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, d. 606/1210) that Ibn Taymiyya considers his main opponents in this doctrinal clash (p. 94).

The second part of the book is the core of the study. It comprises five chapters: chapters 4–7 are arrayed thematically and examine the methodological foundations of Ibn Taymiyya's doctrine of attributes together with its key terminology, and chapter 8 summarizes their main conclusions. Chapter 4 inspects Ibn Taymiyya's underlying ontological premises, pointing out his conceptualist view in ontology, according to which human sensory perception of beings renders the physical world into intangible concepts; these concepts do not exist in reality or outside the human mind, but they can be expressed in the human language (pp. 113–4). Chapter 5 therefore examines Ibn Taymiyya's theory of language and his rejection of the separation between the literal and metaphorical meanings of a given expression, namely the *ḥaqīqa–majāz* dichotomy. As an alternative, Ibn Taymiyya relies on the teachings of *ahl al-hadīth* and promotes the idea of homonymous expressions which are equivocal and denote multiple meanings (pp. 164–5). As a result, such expressions' meanings are relative and dependent on the object to which they refer or the context in which they appear (pp. 176 ff).

Chapter 6 explores Ibn Taymiyya's hermeneutical principles, opening with a discussion on his interpretation of the theologically laden verse Q 3:7 with references to the Islamic exegetical tradition. Suleiman uses Ibn Taymiyya's interpretation of this verse to present his definitions of the terms *muḥkam* (clearly comprehensible verse), *mutasābih* (ambiguous verse) and *ta'wīl* (interpretation). Upholding the methodology of *ahl al-hadīth* once again (p. 192), Ibn Taymiyya sees the divine attributes as absolutely intelligible in terms of their intended meaning on the semantic level and thus *muḥkamāt*; however, their ontic meanings are known to Allāh alone. This chapter also shows how Ibn Taymiyya strove to restrict the later-Ash'arī “general rule” of interpretation (*al-qānūn al-kullī*) which al-Rāzī crystalized in his work *Asās al-taqdīs*. According to this rule, in cases of contradiction between Revelation (i.e. the Islamic scriptures) and Reason (*'aql*), priority is given to Reason as the source of apodictic knowledge. Since a literal interpretation of certain divine attributes implies God's corporeality, the later-Ash'arīs claimed that they are to be interpreted metaphorically (i.e. *ta'wīl majāzī*). Since Ibn Taymiyya discarded this rule and perceived Reason as intrinsic to the Islamic scriptures, Suleiman positively formulates his “two principles and the seven basic rules of interpretation of the divine attributes” (p. 215). Taymiyyan fundamentals of epistemology are explored in chapter 7, where Suleiman explains Ibn Taymiyya's opinion on the applicability of categorical syllogism (*qiyās*) in theology. As Suleiman notes, Ibn Taymiyya drew his inspiration here from Sayf al-Dīn 'l-Āmidī's (d. 631/1233) dialecticism (pp. 241 ff).

The third and final part of the book inspects Ibn Taymiyya's application of his methodology. Chapter 9 concentrates on the effect of time on God's states (*ahwāl*) and actions (*af'āl*). Chapter 10 thereafter scrutinizes the divine attributes of justice (*ʿadl*), speech (*kalām*), exaltation above His throne (*istiwāʾ*), and immanence (*maʿiyya*), with chapter 11 concluding a perception of a dynamic and ever-changing deity whose attributes are temporal at times.

Emphasizing the intellectual developments that Ibn Taymiyya stimulated in his doctrine, the book seems cautious – perhaps overly cautious – in depicting the scholar's stance using the term “traditionalistic” (pp. 60–61). To the best of this reviewer's knowledge, this designation indicates a spectrum of approaches declaring an adherence to the Islamic scriptures. Moreover, traditionalism is relevant to Ibn Taymiyya's ideological commitment to the *salaf* (pious ancestors), as well as to his practical method of corroborating arguments with accumulative evidence from the Islamic scriptures. Both aspects are intrinsic foundations of the Taymiyyan methodology and vital for its understanding, together with his inventive rationality. That said, the book will be helpful to researchers and students of Islamic theology and intellectual history, and it is also beneficial to readers interested in the history of ideas. Notable is Suleiman's decision to publish the book in German, perhaps to signal to the young field of Islamic theological studies in German and European universities. The field was established to foster a devotional scholarship of Islam and the training of Islamic educators. Against the backdrop of current academic discussions on this still-emerging discipline, the significance of studies such as the book under review is clearer than ever.

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PHILIPP WIRTZ:

Depicting the Late Ottoman Empire in Turkish Autobiographies: Images of a Past World.

(Life Narratives of the Ottoman Realm: Individual and Empire in the Near East.) ix, 175 pp. London and New York: Routledge, 2017. ISBN 978 0 36788177 1.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X21000628

This book is a revised version of Philipp Wirtz's 2013 PhD thesis submitted to the history department of SOAS University of London. In this clearly written and concise work, Wirtz attempts to analyse how the Ottoman Empire's final decades are remembered and described in post-Ottoman autobiographical narratives written primarily in the cultural context of the Turkish Republic, which sought to present itself as a complete break from its predecessor. To this end, Wirtz brings together and examines 17 autobiographies penned by an array of authors who were born and raised in the late Ottoman period and later became renowned writers, journalists, soldiers, and politicians. Wirtz's focus lies on the ways in which these figures from different socio-cultural backgrounds made sense of their “Ottoman years” of childhood and youth that saw numerous catastrophic events, the First World War included, overshadowing personal lives.