

of 'Irfan") which focuses on the foundation built up by key Shiraz-based scholars and intellectuals in the seventeenth century like Mulla Sadra and his student Mulla Muhsin Fayz Kashani; this foundation, in turn, was expanded and elaborated by the likes of Shah Muhammad Darabi (d. 1718), 'Ali-Naql Istahbanati (d. 1714), and Sayyid Qutb al-Din Nayrizi (d. 1760). By the close of the eighteenth century, 'irfan was understood to be a unique mysto-philosophical approach to understanding the unique hidden Truth enshrined not necessarily in institutional Sufism (*tasawwuf*), but within Twelver Shiism. This appropriation of 'irfan by Twelver Shiite intellectuals was a profound development, and the remainder of Anzali's book examines (in chapters 5 and 6) how this epistemological shift was concretized and institutionalized across Iranian madrasas, *hauzas*, and other intellectual discursive spaces through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Ata Anzali's book is an invaluable contribution in that it not only sheds light on a complicated tradition being debated and contested among philosophers and Sufi-theosophists but it also contextualizes the importance of 'irfan in religio-political discourse during the earlier Pahlavi period and as contemporary Iran plots its post-revolutionary future. Additionally, we must applaud the author for underscoring the importance of approaching terms like 'irfan as more than simple synonyms for mysticism, or Sufism, but as complex notions which themselves can be moulded, defined, and applied differentially on the basis of a wide array of contexts.

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MÓNICA COLOMINAS APARICIO:

*The Religious Polemics of the Muslims of Late Medieval Christian Iberia: Identity and Religious Authority in Mudejar Islam.*

(The Medieval and Early Modern Iberian World.) xiv, 397 pp. Leiden: Brill, 2018. ISBN 978 90 04 34635 2.

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The survival of Islamic culture in Christian territories has attracted the interest of scholars for a long time. Muslims who remained in the Hispanic kingdoms (known as *Mudejars*) maintained in many cases both their Islamic faith and their cultural productions, which were expressed in Arabic and in Spanish, written mainly in Arabic characters (*Aljamiado*).

The book under review deals with one of those elements of Mudejar culture which has not received the scholarly attention it deserves: anti-Jewish and anti-Christian religious polemic. The main features of the religious discussion of the Mudejars are already known; however, a deeper analysis of the main works of Mudejar polemic is still necessary. Colominas' book not only addresses the revision of religious controversy as dogmatic confrontation, but also analyses these works within the Mudejar universe. She tries to discern how Mudejar authors articulated ideas about their own identity as Muslims, how the religious leaders built their authority, and also how the socio-economic and political elements which affected the Mudejars were reflected in their religious controversies.

After a historiographical review of Mudejar works of polemic, the four most significant are introduced: the *Kitāb Miftāh al-Dīn* by Muhammad al-Qaysī, written in

1309 CE; the “Questions [asked] by the Jews”, a text widespread among Mudejars; the *Ta’yīd al-Milla* (TM), an anti-Jewish treatise copied by the imām al-Raqīlī, in Pitrula (possibly Pedrola, in Aragon) in 1405 CE, whose Aljamiado version is offered in an Annex; and the *Kitāb al-Mujādala* (KM), also copied by al-Raqīlī, which was written in the environment of the Sharafis, an important Mudejar family with close ties with the fourteenth-century Christian elite. From the introduction of these works, the author draws important conclusions: T, KM and the Aljamiado adaptation of the *Kitāb Miṣtāh al-Dīn* were carried out in the fourteenth century, when Christians intensified their preaching to Mudejars; one of them, KM, was written in the milieu of an elite Mudejar family; the works reflected the changing relationship between Christians and Jews and involved an effort to find a proper situation for Muslims within this context.

Using the “Grammars of Identity / Alterity” developed by Baumann as a theoretical framework, Colominas makes a penetrating analysis of TM, indicating that the Torah is among the most important sources of controversy and again, how the interaction between Jews and Christians may have prompted the Mudejar polemic against the Jews, far beyond the common use of a series of topics. Although the texts belong to the Islamic tradition, she emphasizes some of their particular characteristics due to the specific situation of the Mudejars, such as the emphasis on the ethics of the believer, more than on religious controversies.

Chapter 6 deals with the Mudejar polemics against Christians, especially through KM, which is the most original work analysed in this book. It was possibly composed by someone close to the Mudejar Sharafī family, established in Toledo. The text is said to be based on the treatises of the qādī Abū-l-Abbās Ahmad al-Lakhmi al-Sharafī, not completely identified, but certainly well related to the Castilian Christian elite. The identification of the family fits very well with the presence in the work of Christian authors, concepts, and mentions. It is a singular text in the Mudejar corpus, not only for the pre-eminent place given to human reason, but for its defence of logic and philosophy as sources of knowledge and religious authority. Equally peculiar is the clash to some *ulamā* as incapable of understanding the potential of philosophy for religious controversy.

KM offers other surprising findings, such as the view that many *ulamā* do not understand Islam (so they cannot defeat the Christians in polemics), the fruitful triangle formed by philosophy, logic and Sharia, and its commitment to an ethical religious model that would correspond to Islam as the religion that best fits human nature. The final outcome is that one can be a good Muslim living in non-Islamic territories as long as people act with good sense and the duties of Islam are correctly fulfilled. It is interesting to realize how, despite TM and KM supporting different intellectual positions, both reinforce the authors’ role as religious authorities that should be followed. Through the assertion of Mudejar membership of the *umma*, the authors emphasize their ability (and their right) to govern themselves as Muslims under Christian rule.

Colominas’ book is an appreciable contribution to our knowledge of the religious universe of the Mudejars and their capacity for religious controversy. Based on a penetrating analysis, it not only scrutinizes the controversial points, but manages to illuminate the central place of religious authority among the Mudejars, the main role of controversy in the construction of their identity, and the intergroup dynamics that fuel these polemics.

Another strength of the book is to have detected some points in need of further discussion, already announced in some cases. It is also appreciable that the research background on the Mudejars and their productions is always given. Surprisingly, however, while reading some specific points addressed by several scholars one

could gain the impression that the Big Bang started in the Netherlands. There are, in any case, some points that deserve further discussion, such as the place occupied by popular religiosity in the controversial discourse or in the religious life of the Mudejars. Would the Mudejar *Maghāzīs* potentially contain controversial elements as well? Would the miracles of the Prophet Muhammad be used in a controversial discourse to feed popular religiosity or was it religiosity that fuelled the controversy? Why did the aljamas adopt the position of avoiding controversial discussion?

In short, this is a valuable book, full of suggestive interpretations that contribute to the history of the polemics in the Islamic West. The intellectual wealth of the elites of Mudejar society, and their ways of building their identity, are drawn in a skilful way to show the complexities of a Muslim group living in a peripheral, aggressive context, albeit sure of its own religious personality.

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WAEEL B. HALLAQ:

*Restating Orientalism: A Critique of Modern Knowledge.*

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Fifteen years after Edward Said's untimely passing, Wael Hallaq presents the first book-length immanent critique of *Orientalism*, the book that launched the ongoing struggle to decolonize the humanities in 1978. Wael Hallaq endows Said with the rarified status of "founder of discursivity". But Said's influence on the humanities has not been the blessing we all thought it was, he argues in *Restating Orientalism*. This is not surprising. Whereas Edward Said repeated, time and again, the mantra that "everything is hopelessly mixed up together" – "the search for roots is essentially an affirmation of identity, ethnic identity, religious identity, national identity. And that is almost always a construction" – Wael Hallaq presents a labyrinthine identitarian argument for an autogenetic, singular, pre-modern Islam that was destroyed by rapacious liberal and secular thoughts of European modernity. He charges Said and his postcolonial interpreters with blindness to the structural violence that Enlightenment rationalism wrought on the planet because they have only considered Orientalism as a regime of "(mis)representation" which is both too totalizing and too limiting. The point is to study how most Orientalists actually implemented this regime and assimilated the Orient into the fold of Western modernity.

This destructive modernity sprang not even from the geo-political dialectics of capitalism and the colonial encounter. These are political economists' "superficial" arguments that effectively make the non-Western victims of European violence complicit in their own subjugation (pp. 19–20). Rather, modernity was rooted entirely and autogenetically in modern European thought as Christian theology turned into the theology of secularism in the aftermath of the four genocides of the sixteenth century – the Amerindian, Andalusian, African and the Great Inquisition's witch-hunt (pp. 85–7). While I am sympathetic to the Dialectics-of-Enlightenment critiques of colonial modernity, *Restating Orientalism* fails to prove its particular case, whether by historical evidence or sound philosophical argument, for the "necessary effects" of early modern philosophy on sixteenth- or, indeed, twentieth-century genocides (p. 232). Moreover, Hallaq's uncharitable, polemical and prosecutorial style of arguing makes his passionate