

has the opportunity to do justice to the broader question of artistic "influence." It should be noted, however, that the concept of "influence" tends to put the emphasis on the wrong syllable. In his book *Patterns of Intention* (New Haven, 1985), the eminent art historian Michael Baxandall has written that the concept of influence confuses the agent with the patient. Sasanian Iran, for example, could have had no "influence" on the arts of the Islamic lands because the Sasanians were long dead. Nor could ancient Arabia have "influenced" the architecture of Saudi Arabia. Rather, there was something going on in the Islamic lands or in Saudi Arabia that led artists or patrons to look back and borrow from the arts and architecture of earlier times. I wish that some of the participants in this conference had addressed such issues.

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*The Origins of the Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book.* Edited by IBN WARRAQ. Amherst, New York: PROMETHEUS BOOKS, 1998. Pp. 411.

This is a collection of articles in Qur'anic studies by some of the more influential early pioneers in the field: Nöldeke's famous article for the *Britannica* (9th ed., 1891); Caetani's study of the "Uthmanic recension tradition" (1915); Mingana's: "Three Ancient Korans" (1914) and "The Transmission of the Koran" (1916); four seemingly idiosyncratically chosen articles by Arthur Jeffery (1935–39); Margoliouth's study of variants (1925); Geiger's "What Did Muhammad Borrow from Judaism" (1898); W. St. Clair-Tisdall's "The Sources of Islam" (1901); and Torrey's "The Jewish Foundations of Islam" (1933). The collection ends with Andrew Rippin's earnest discussion of the stimulating, controversial, daunting, and ill-starred work of John Wansbrough (1985). Here, one gets the impression that Wansbrough is the only post-war scholar to have taken the literary presuppositions and findings of the other earlier authors seriously enough to press these to some logical conclusions. Why this should be so is not addressed. But the discussion does yield a salubrious insight: the Qur'an is first and foremost an instance of "Salvation History," not a book of history *qua* history, and that stabilization—and therefore a kind of canonization—of the text occurred at a much later period than generally assumed.

Gathered here together, it will become clear to the reader that each article is important also as a product of a specific time, place, and élan. Such is indeed signaled on the dustjacket where it is pointed out that "this penetrating work" begins with "the first truly scientific study of the Koran" (i.e., Nöldeke's). The editor, "Ibn Warraq" whom the same dustjacket identifies

as "the author of *Why I am Not A Muslim*," has done a service for undergraduates and others who have difficulty in locating the originals of these groundbreaking—and, in some sense—relics of Qur'anic scholarship. It will also quickly become clear to the contemporary student of Islam, however, that several of these various essays are about much more than the pure vertical love of Qur'anic scholarship.

Beyond questioning the motives for publishing such a collection at the end of the twentieth century, the reader is confronted with an introduction distinctive for its repeated lapses in style: "the founder of the Shias" (p. 11), "Heilgeschichte" (p. 34), unreferenced quotations and assertions (e.g., pp. 14, 19, 34). Arrogance and amateurish deductions abound; and all is sounded in the key of gormless hysteria: "Some of the stories in the Koran are enormously long; for instance, the story of Joseph takes up a whole chapter of 111 verses. Are we really to believe that Muhammad remembered it exactly as it was revealed?" (p. 13); or even better: "Most scholars believe that there are interpolations in the Koran" (p. 17). Indeed.

This same introduction uses for a motto a statement published in 1933 by that prolific apostle of scientism, Saloman Reinach (1858–1932):

From the literary point of view, the Koran has little merit. Declamation, repetition, puerility, a lack of logic and coherence strike the unprepared reader at every turn. It is humiliating to the human intellect to think that this mediocre literature has been the subject of innumerable commentaries, and that millions of men are still wasting time absorbing it. (p. 9)

It is difficult to see how this characterization improves upon the more famous and better written one by Thomas Carlyle a hundred years earlier, except perhaps in degree of offensiveness. It must be said that it undoubtedly demonstrates the editor's diligence and industry in finding churlish things to say about the Qur'an in English. It is difficult to recommend this production, except perhaps for antiquarian interests and the archaeology of the study of Islam.

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*The Arabic Manuscript Tradition: A Glossary of Technical Terms and Bibliography.* By ADAM GACEK. Handbook of Oriental Studies: sect. 1, Near and Middle East, vol. 58. Leiden: BRILL, 2001. Pp. xvi + 269. Eur 57.

Orientalists are more and more aware of the importance of codicology and paleography, sciences that have developed re-

cently in connection with oriental studies. However, notwithstanding the weight of the manuscript tradition in Islamic civilization, few of us are able to take advantage of both of them. Nowadays, as research is more devoted to specific themes instead of critical editions of texts, students in our field are less accustomed to work with manuscripts, which were once a part of the curriculum of our predecessors of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although some students are able to read manuscripts, which is even yet a *tour de force*, most of the time they do not know how to apprehend them properly, i.e., as a codex. There is no doubt therefore that this book will help to fill this gap.

Adam Gacek has divided it into two parts. The first is devoted to the technical terms of the subject arranged in alphabetical order according to the root, which, however, requires of the reader a good knowledge of Arabic. Each term is documented by references to sources, and often quotations that give the possibility of understanding a particular meaning in its context. The second part contains not only all the bibliographical references used, but also other sources and titles relevant to the subject. Students of this aspect of Islamic civilization have now a reference work at their disposal, a unique tool that will give them the opportunity to understand Arabic manuscripts better. Perhaps they would have benefited even further by some schematic illustrations showing to what correspond the various technical terms relative to bookbinding, for instance. Nevertheless here is the result of many years of practice, representing meticulous and tremendous scholarship, for which Gacek must be thanked. This book is definitely a landmark in Islamic studies.

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*Kitāb al-Ifk̄hār*. By ABŪ YA<sup>Q</sup>ŪB IŠHĀQ B. AḤMAD AL-SIJISTĀNĪ. Edited with commentary by ISMAIL K. POONAWALA. Beirut: DAR AL-GHARB AL-ISLAMĪ, 2000. Pp. xxviii (English) + 497 (Arabic).

In 1980 Muṣṭafā Ghālib published one version of this important text by the tenth-century Ismaili theorist, the Iranian *dā<sup>ʿ</sup>i* al-Sijistānī. At the time Ismail Poonawala, who is perhaps our leading expert on Ismaili works and manuscripts, had all but completed his own edition of the same treatise. Unfortunately, the appearance of Ghālib's publication of it made Poonawala's project seem unnecessary, at least to the unsuspecting. To those who bothered to check, however, Ghālib's effort fell far short of a critical scholarly edition, the most serious lapse of which was his deliberate omission of portions out of deference to what he feared in it would offend the sensibilities of the larger

Islamic community. But, given that the work itself is and was always a stridently polemical defense of Ismaili doctrines (which may well have brought about al-Sijistānī's own martyrdom as a consequence of his authorship), to treat it with such reserve is worse than not publishing it at all.

Fortunately, Poonawala persevered and has at last produced the kind of scholarly edition this and other early Ismaili works deserve. Based on the close reading and collation of fourteen manuscripts, amplified by extensive textual notes that include both variants and the explanatory comments of various copyists—including those by the noted Ismaili scholar Zahid Ali (on his own manuscript copy)—this is without question now the only version to consult. Poonawala has added succinct introductions both in English and Arabic, indexes of names, places, books, Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ānic verses and hadith, and most importantly an elaborate commentary of his own (pp. 267–429). In the latter he has drawn on a multitude of sources to help explain what al-Sijistānī said in this work. One of those sources is the same author's unpublished *Kitāb al-Maqālid*, whole sections of which Poonawala has now inserted here where useful and appropriate (as examples, there are in his commentary passages—some lengthy—from *iq̄lids* 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 19, 28, 40, 50, 52, 65, and 66, among others). All in all, one could hardly hope for a better, more comprehensive edition. This publication represents therefore a critical milestone in the recovery of such texts and in the study of the earliest Ismailis.

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*al-Dawla al-fāṭimiyya fī Miṣr: Tafsīr jadīd*. 2nd ed. By AYMAN FU<sup>ʿ</sup>AD SAYYID. Cairo: AL-DĀR AL-MISRIYYA AL-LUBNĀNIYYA, 2000. Pp. 817.

The first edition of Ayman Fuad Sayyid's *The Fatimid State in Egypt: A New Interpretation*, which appeared in 1992, was at the time the most important new general study of the Fatimids in Arabic, especially on Egypt and in Egypt. Nothing as comprehensive had been published for many years. An older generation of Egyptian scholars was more active in Fatimid studies, but in the present Ayman Fuad Sayyid is one of only a few and is clearly far and away the leading authority. For the past two decades he has edited or re-edited most of the basic sources. Those editions have often been models of erudition, with a wealth of detail in the explanatory notes along with numerous citations to additional sources. His *Fatimid State* is, however, a work of synthesis, what he calls in the subtitle *tafsīr jadīd*, "a new interpretation." "New" here applies more precisely to the context of modern writing about the Fatimids in Arabic.

