

BEHNAM SADEGHI, ASAD Q AHMED, ADAM SILVERSTEIN AND  
ROBERT HOYLAND (EDS.) *ISLAMIC CULTURES, ISLAMIC CONTEXTS:  
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Many a collection of essays in posthumous honour to a celebrated expert in a given field, seem less a true memorial and more an excuse to publish or a mere venue to expose one's work.

This most certainly does not seem to be the case with this volume honouring the life and work of Patricia Crone. Many of the essays within the tome's covers start with a note of thanks to the late historian, or an anecdote describing work with her. All the essays acknowledge or use her work as, at the very least, a starting point. Most important, the reader gets the sense that the articles submitted are work that would have interested Crone.

Perhaps this impression is begat due to the clear links from article to article, which allow the idea of internal coherence within the book to form. This impression is further emphasised by the fact that the different chapters are put together with an excellent sense of narrative. What by all accounts need not be more than a disjointed collection of essays gives the appearance of following some manner of order. Minor aspects of one essay will be the main focus of the next, texts with commonalities will be placed next to each other.

It is but an impression, yet it allows the book to be read as a whole with greater ease, and consequently those who are interested primarily in one chapter and wish merely to consult the book are recommended to, at the very least, examine the chapters immediately adjacent to those consulted.

Though aspects of consecutive chapters give an impression of continuity the truth is that we *are* still discussing a collection of essays. As such the topics vary

widely, and it is impossible to adequately describe the book without including brief summaries of each of the texts.

The tome starts with a quick justification of the collection, and a brief memoir describing Crone's life and accomplishments, as well as a copy of her outstanding Curriculum Vitae, which veritably gives a glimpse into an amazingly busy life.

The first chapter 'Varient Traditions, Relative Chronology, and the Study of Intra-Quranic' Parallels, by Joseph Witztum, examines different traditions of scholarly approaches to the Quran, discussing, amongst other variations, differing ways of using and incorporating context, the utility of parallel texts and the use of diachronic methods of analysis. The long text is full of examples and analysis thereof.

Chapter two -'The Earliest Attestation of the Dhimma of God and His Messenger and the Rediscovery of P. Nessana 77 (60s AH/680 CE)'- by Robert Hoyland, delves into the study of some unusual written sources, specifically a bilingual Greek-Arabic two-sided tax-demand note, of which only one side was a photographic copy available in the Rockefeller museum, and thereafter published, the original, *Nessana 77* also known as *Lena 153*, had been lost. The story of the rediscovery of this text, allowing the Arabic side to be studied, is detailed in an appendix written by the discoverer, Hannah Cotton. Included, we also find a transcript of the text and a copy of the document, as well as contextualising information, including the fact that we are before the first known use of *Dhimma* outside the Quran.

Guy G. Stroumsa's 'Jewish Christianity and Islamic Origins' offers an account of what is generally known as Jewish Christianity's -though Stroumsa acknowledges how flawed the term is- role in the origins of Islam. The ideas are in his own admission seemingly old fashioned, and in this way, and perhaps ironically, controversial. In spite of this, it seems like a conception worth exploring, given the dearth of evidence for or against theories concerning this origin story.

In 'A note on the Relationship between *tafsir* and Common Understanding with Reference to Contracts of Marriage' Karen Bauer takes on a linguistic analysis of Tafsir texts so as to discover the ways in which they were used and understood.

Gerald Hawting and David M. Eisenberg discuss the conception of what is commonly known as *Earnest Money* -money given in advance for a service or commodity, and which is not to be returned if either side of the deals backs down- in Islamic Law; where it is denominated *Bay' al-'arabūn*, in "Earnest Money' and the Sources of Islamic Law'. The authors do so by examining its multifarious origins, its use inside and outside the Islamic world, as well as the *hadith* where it is reported to have been prohibited by the Prophet.

An analysis of Qur'ān verses dealing with inheritance and bequests takes place in Pavel Pavlovich and David S. Powers' text "A Bequest May Not Exceed One-Third'. An *Isnād-cum-Matn* Analysis and Beyond'. It includes a wonderful diagram describing the Transmission history and reconstructed wording of the *Sa'd*-will tradition via 'Amr b. al-Qārī, describing the evolution of authors discussing the tradition, which is very useful while reading the rest of the article.

Chapter seven, by Christopher Melchert, titled 'Basra and Kufa as the Earliest Centers of Islamic Legal Controversy' examines proof in favour of Patricia Crone's idea that the main difference within Islamic Law is that between Kufan and Basran schools on the one hand, and Medinese and later schools on the other, and not, as often believed, a division along Sunni- non-Sunni lines. They conclude that it is quite likely the original division is actually that between Kufan and Basran schools. Possibly, later Medinese law was based on the original Basran law- which was later heavily changed by Kufan schools.

D.G. Tor does a great job describing political and religious change in the Abbasid caliphate in 'God's cleric: Al-Fuḍayl b. 'Iyāḍ and the Transition from Caliphal to Prophetic Sunna'. In this text we discover in what way the hadith folk, or proto-Sunnites took over religious duties that had until then been the prerogative of the Caliph. The *ahl al-ḥadīth* become important in the reigns of Abbasid Caliphs al-Mansur and Harun al-Rashid. Whereas the Caliph was supposed to be the Imam, an example for his subjects and the most important religious figure of the caliphate, these Caliphs consulted the pious *ahl al-ḥadīth* on religious matters because they recalled unwritten stories about the prophet-traditions, or hadiths- and they were quite clearly dedicated to God. The article describes the interactions recorded between Fuḍayl, an important proto-Sunni, and Hārūn al-Rashīd, as an example demonstrating the shift in religious authority during the Abbasid caliphate.

'Aḥmad ibn Ṭūlūn and the Politics of Deference', Matthew S. Gordon's piece, offers answers to the question of why ibn Ṭūlūn -governor of Egypt for 16 years for the Abbasid caliphate- continued to defer to Baghdad while having resources to act in stronger and more independent ways. Gordon concludes that to do so would have forced the governor to overthrow the very establishment upon which his prominence rested. He could seek more power within the Abbasid framework, but not break with it.

Kevin van Bladel's 'Eighth-Century Indian Astronomy in the two Cities of Peace' describes the link between Abbasid interest in Sanskrit science predating and leading to the interest in Greek science, and a similar presence in Tang dynasty courts of Indian astronomy. The possibility that the interest in translations from Sanskrit derives from an imitation of Sassanid patronage of science is acknowledged, but the bulk of the text goes to describing and explaining the more exciting interpretation allowed by Abbasid-Tang strife and

communication, and the widespread use of Indian astronomy in Central Asia within a similar time-frame.

In 'Greek Language and Education under Early Islam' Maria Mavroudi explains why Christian literature in Arabic in the ninth Century does not mean that Greek was wholly abandoned by Christians under Islamic rule by that time. Indeed she claims that Greek education was possible at that time and that the language survived for a long time along with Coptic in Egypt and Syriac in the Levant, in spite of Arabic playing an ever increasing role in society. Greek in Muslim lands died a slow death, and literary Greek survived even longer within limited circles.

'Kalām and the Greeks', is Fritz W. Zimmermann's logical and analytic attempt to show that the origin of Muslim dialectic- Kalām- has links in its origins to Greek dialectics, in particular Greek dilemmatic argumentation. By examining Kalām from multiple faiths we can find that where there is Kalām there are dilemmas.

Michael Cooperson describes what *Arab* and *Iranian* meant in Abbasid times in "Arabs' and 'Iranians': The Uses of Ethnicity in the Early Abbasid Period". In so doing he presents various personal narratives in which the ethonims become confused. It becomes clear in the article that ethonims change meaning with time, and more specifically, that every characteristic that distinguished an Arab from other ethnic groups was transferrable to members of those groups given the right conditions. Eighth and ninth century peoples could adopt language and religion in a way that destabilised ethnic denominations. The Umma, as it expanded, necessarily changed in character. The main idea to be derived from the article is that any statement about distinctiveness in fact takes part in the construction of the reality it is attempting to describe. By calling something by a particular name, it becomes the thing described by that name.

'The Poetics of Cultural Identity: Al-Mutanabbī among the Būyids', by Margaret Larkin, shares the idea of mutating conceptions of ethnicity, with the previous article, but presents the idea that some of these changes within one individual's experience have been exposed by his poetry. Al-Mutanabbī's poetry, linked to a certain perception of Arab ethnicity changed after working for the Persian Būyids. The piece where this change is most notable is described.

Khaled El-Rouayheb describes a problem extant in Islamic divine command ethics in 'Must God Tell Us the Truth? A Problem in Ash'arī Theology'. The problem is the following; Must God keep his promises of Paradise, or is he free to break them? The author describes the opinions on this matter of various scholars from within this religious school of thought. Al-Juwaynī, Al-Ghazālī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī all follow a similar argument which the first starts, and the others refine. It begins by stating that it would be impossible for God to falsely assent to someone's claim to prophethood by granting them a miracle when they aren't really a prophet, because the very miracle is an action

granting prophethood. This kind of action is compared to Austin's *performative speech act theory*. In spite of this, the truthfulness of the prophet is not guaranteed. What guarantees it is that the World of God, i.e. the spiritual world of ideas cannot, by definition be false. As God belongs to this realm he cannot plant falsehoods, or at the very least, that he should do so is unthinkable. The oral word depends on the prophet, who depends on miracles so as to claim he speaks in God's behalf, and on the spiritual world for access to the truth. The argument is often accused of circularity, or of claiming lies are bad independently of God's opinion on the matter, which is precisely the sort of idea the proponents of these arguments are against.

'Administrators' Time: The Social Memory of the Early Medieval State, East and West' is Chris Wickham's account of how stories reflect the remembrance of previous administrators by those telling the stories. Stories are told from Tenth Century Islamic lands, sixth-century Roman Byzantium, and tenth-century China. It is found that different kinds of stories reflect different levels of acceptance of political corruption. Where it is mentioned as a plot point, corruption is an accepted and essential part of governance, whereas where it is barely mentioned, it is a hidden and taboo practice.

Devin J. Stewart's 'An Eleventh-Century Justification of the Authority of Twelver Shiite Jurists' is an elucidating perspective on one particular problem within a related panoply in the world of Islam. Where does authority reside within Islam, if it is legitimately held by anyone? This specific case studies the justification of authority for Eleventh Century Twelver Jurists. The text searches for answers in Alī al-Karājiki's work, and includes a translation of his text based on pp. 301-3 of the 1904 edition of *Kanz al-Fawā'id* and vol.2, pp. 2016-19 of the 1985 edition.

In 'A Family Story: Ambiguities of Jewish identity in Medieval Islam' David J. Wasserstein recounts the family history of four generations of a Jewish-Iberian Banū Naghrīla lineage living in what is now the south of Spain and was then called Al-Andalus, and the changes in identity as Jews that varying circumstances led to. The earliest the author can trace the family back with accuracy is Merida, where Joseph ha-Levi ibn al-Naghrīla resided before moving to Cordoba mid-Tenth Century. His eldest son Isaac is not well known, but his youngest, Samuel moved to Malaga after the collapse of Cordoba as capital. He there becomes the main servant of a brutish Berber vizier, soon taking his place as vizier to the Zirīa Berber ruler, and moving with him to Granada. There he served as vizier, amongst great honours, becoming a great philanthropist, scholar, poet, and leader. He earns the title Nagid, or prince of Jews in Iberia, having become a religious leader also. He has four children; A daughter, Qasmara, a poet in Arabic, and three sons, Judah, Eliasaf and Yehoseph. Yehoseph succeeds him as vizier and Nagid, but is considered an unworthy successor and precipitates one of

a very small number of Jewish pogroms in Islamic lands in this time period, the riot and massacre of Granada in 1066. Yehoseph's son Azarya escapes to Lucena, a Jewish enclave within the same realm, where he inherits the title Nagid, but dies before it is of any significance. Wasserstein concludes that Jews could thrive in Islam, but not become arabised in the same way Christians did.

David Albulafia's article is in many ways a perfect choice to follow Wasserstein's text. 'What Happened in al-Andalus: Minorities in al-Andalus and in Christian Spain' helps explain the events described in Wasserstein's article. The text seems to focus on explaining up to what point, and in what way the *convivencia* –the peaceful cohabitation of Jews, Moors and Christians in Islamic Iberia– happened. The fact that in early Muslim Spain Arab Muslims are a minority, if a powerful one, is highlighted. Most people, especially in the countryside were most probably Christian. The Moorish conquest was one of Moorish Muslims, Jews and Christians over Visigoth Catholics, Arians, Pagans and persecuted Jews. It was a time period in which mass conversion was easier as religious boundaries weren't as strict. Curiously, Christians assimilated more easily than Jews, in spite, or perhaps because, of greater similarities between Islam and Judaism. Christians had to change to adapt, whereas Muslim rule allowed Jewish differences and culture to flourish, until stricter Almoravid and Almohad Muslims took over.

Mudéjares – Muslims in twelfth and thirteenth-century Christian Spain – lived more similarly to how Christians had lived under Almoravid and Almohad rule, than to Christian in previous Muslim administrations. The specific rights of different populations varied a lot, but all paid tribute to the King, and were, in a sense, his property, as were Jews. They had a hard time acculturating in both Islamic and Christian lands without abandoning their faith, or pretending to. Marranos did the latter, losing much of their Jewish culture. *Convivencia* was a dynamic process with a different meaning for different groups at different times.

Adam Silverstein's 'The Samaritan Version of the *Esther* Story' explores a rarely discussed Samaritan version of *Esther* by Abū l-Ḥasan. This version turns the Jews from protagonists to antagonists. It seems ancient Samaritans thought *Esther* was historical and desired to set the record straight.

In 'New Evidence for the Survival of Sexually Libertine Rites among some Nuṣayrī-'Alawīs of the Nineteenth Century' Bella Tandler Krieger examines a possibly fake text concerning rites among the secretive Nuṣayrī-'Alawīs. It is believed that even if the text is a slanderous fake, it is quite possible some rites and customs are well recorded, though perhaps misconstrued. Translations and transcripts of excerpts of the text are presented and used.

The final text, 'Crone and the End of Orientalism' – by Chase F. Robinson– is a fitting end to the tome dealing as it does with Patricia Crone's effect on the study of early Islamic history between 1975 and 1990. In the books written at this time

she assaulted a range of scholarly orthodoxies with new methods, slowly making conservative complacency on the subject impossible, disallowing the uncritical use of Ninth and Tenth Century material to describe the Seventh Century. Crone's ability to make evidence fit new models is said to have been field-changing, but perhaps less important than her making it easier and normal for those in the field to acknowledge that there are aspects of the field still unproven or unknown.

In general I consider the book excellent. Though many will use it as reference, consulting only those articles that fit their immediate need, it is perfectly possible to read most of the book merely for pleasure, as most of the articles are written in a comfortable and easy to read way. The index found at the end is long and useful for those who only wish to consult, and most of the articles have long and useful bibliography, allowing further study of any of the topics touched upon. We are before a wonderful book for anyone interested in any way in the history of the Islamic world.