

In his analysis of geonic positions taken regarding this practice, the author argues that while rejecting or severely limiting the practice, their strict adherence to and interpretation of the Halakha should not be allowed to mask the extent of their efforts to deal with real and concrete questions. Reading geonic application in the responsa against rabbinic principles, he points to the responsa's positive attitude regarding the reliability of the Muslim courts and their acceptance of the legality of "evidentiary" (as opposed to "constitutive") documents drawn in them. Furthermore, he argues that there was a measure of both pragmatism and creativity in geonic responses to the reality of legal choices and the Jews' imbeddedness in broader Muslim society. He points to borrowing from Muslim practice—such as the institutions of *'udūl* and *suftaja*—and avers that those apparently inclusive gestures—a partial adoption of the principle of "the law of the government is the law"—were at their core single-mindedly intended to "safeguard Jewish law." In that regard they very much resembled the parallel endeavors of East Syrian and West Syrian ecclesiastical authorities.

In making his case Simonsohn examines an impressively broad range of material in many languages including Hebrew, Syriac, Arabic, and Coptic, subjecting canons, responsa, and other legal texts to compelling analysis. Particularly noteworthy is his comparative and tabulated analysis of epithets used to designate nonecclesiastical authority (p. 168). By the author's own repeated acknowledgement, the sources are scarce, scattered, and mostly thin and indirect. This he tries to remedy by examining comparable sources from other times and places (especially in the case of the Jewish community), and by widening his purview to include both pre-Islamic legal histories and Muslim practices. This makes his argument for the ubiquity of legal pluralism both fascinating and compelling; at the same time it detracts from his core interest in Christian and Jewish socio-legal life.

Although Simonsohn's argument for continuity from pre-Islamic to Islamic times and for legal interaction among different legal and confessional systems is deeply informed, it is not always successful in keeping analytically distinct the various levels of legal practice that he considers. This is compounded by the author's fondness for over-partitioning his text, for making a rather large number of historiographic short stops, and for long and repetitive introductions and conclusions, all of which might be inevitable given the challenging agenda and the relative paucity of sources. In this ambitious attempt to effect a paradigm shift in the historiography of early Islam's *dhimmi* communities, Simonsohn's deeply researched and intricately argued study makes important contributions to overlapping fields of inquiry and sheds new light on the socio-legal lives of several historical communities.

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Sufism: A Global History. By NILE GREEN. Chichester, West Sussex, and Malden, Mass.: WILEY-BLACKWELL, 2012. Pp. xxi + 263, illus. \$84.95 (cloth); \$34.95 (paper).

Four surprises await readers of Nile Green's new book: first, that he has set out to do a "global history" of Sufism in barely 200 pages of actual text; second, that he has largely succeeded in doing so; third, that he has found a way to include a remarkable array of information beyond what one might imagine would be de rigueur for such a broad overview; and finally, that within the relatively narrow confines of the text he packs a remarkable store of corrective insights. How Green has managed this considerable feat is nearly as interesting as the contents of this engaging volume. Adequately annotated chapters encompassing four large chronological eras stretched across increasingly expansive swaths of geography represent an interesting and not entirely predictable "periodization."

Green's methodological introduction provides a useful working definition of Sufism: "a powerful tradition of Muslim knowledge and practice bringing proximity to or mediation with God and believed to have been handed down from the Prophet Muhammad through the saintly successors who followed him" (p. 8). There he expresses the hope "that the scope of coverage and the overall model of a tradition

being gradually elaborated and distributed to so many different contexts lends originality to the narrative as a whole” (p. 11). It does.

A chapter on “Origins, Foundations, and Rivalries (850–1100)” begins with the most illuminating discussion of Sufism’s genesis that I have seen. Green carefully filters out a series of shop-worn scenarios, such as over-reliance on the etymological centrality of the term *ṣūf*, the diachronic notion that ascetics/asceticism yielded definitively to mystics/mysticism, and the “historical structuralist” attribution of seminal influence to Nestorian Christian hagiographical sources. Green settles on a more synchronically integral view in which, for example, ascetics and mystics fulfilled distinct and different roles in a given setting, and one needs to search the context of a given Sufi’s own time (rather than earlier “influences”) for reasons as to why he/she was known as a Sufi. This organic approach allows Green to situate Sufism more subtly within a rich cross-current of intellectual and spiritual developments, rather than emphasizing adversarial features such as its oft-claimed antinomianism or anti-intellectualism. He focuses on Sufism’s “emergence as belonging to the development of a wider scholar class that was not only equipped with knowledge of Qur’an, Hadith and the specialist skills of interpreting them, but was also gaining increasing social authority by dint of both possessing such textual or discursive knowledge and putting its righteous example into practice” (p. 25). Sufism is thus not simply an idiosyncratic, aberrant sidetrack to “mainstream” Islamic tradition. On the contrary, it was a distinctive way of studying, interiorizing, and communicating that tradition that situated Sufis not as “spirit-filled radicals,” but as “fierce upholders of the emerging moral and legal order” (p. 28).

At the nexus of the origins of this complex culture, Green locates the intriguing figure of Muḥāsibī (d. 857), who earned the sobriquet “self-reckoner” because of his insistence on spiritual conscience formation. His treatment of Iraqi Sufism then highlights four case studies of early major Sufis—Kharrāz, Sahl al-Tustarī, Junayd, and Ḥallāj—before offering a briefer overview of late tenth-century Iraq. A surprisingly fresh treatment of developments in Sufism further east, in Khurāsān, comprises the single largest section of the chapter, offering cameo appearances of a score of major figures and several distinctively “eastern” movements (e.g., the Karrāmiyya, Malāmatiyya, and Ḥakīms) eventually supplanted by Sufism. Though these are generally the “usual suspects” in the scenario, Green’s narrative provides an often novel perspective, such as his identification of Shāfi‘ī jurisprudence as the vehicle of “a more efficient method of acquiring and making practical use of the textual knowledge with which Sufi and non-Sufi specialists had long been concerned” (p. 50). To this method Green attributes (at least in part) the growth of Sufi “master-disciple” lineages. He also offers another of his thoughtful re-takes on standard topics, suggesting that the Sufi handbooks produced in Khurāsān functioned as “advertisement and manifestos” for regional scholars unfamiliar with Sufism, rather than as apologetics aimed at exculpating Sufism of any taint of heterodoxy. Toward the end of this chapter Green doubles back to the central Middle East, whither “eastern” Sufism brought its various metamorphoses of the brand, along with its new literary genres and related institutional developments (such as the *madrasa*, the residential *khānaqāh*, and new rituals such as *dhikr* and *samā‘*).

Green’s geographical compass broadens in chapter two, extending from the western Mediterranean across the central Middle East through central and south Asia. Along the way he focuses on four large developments: first, “diversification”—the expansion of Sufi literary vehicles, breadth of themes discussed, and theoretical complexity; second, “institutionalization”—the proliferation of organizational structures; third, “sanctification”—the increasing importance of exemplars and embodiments of spiritual authority, especially as evidenced in multiplication of tomb-shrines and various forms of hagiographical literature; and finally, “vernacularization”—the increasing importance of literature across many genres in regional languages, thus rendering Arabic less exclusively “canonical.” Here, too, Green consistently challenges long accepted conclusions about the perceived trajectory of entropy in the history of Sufism. For example, one need not read “institutionalization” as a death knell of independence through capitulation to both financial and ideological servitude, and thus invariably an index of stagnation, decline, and slouching into nostalgia. The very insightful chapter is marred (pedagogically) only by an apparently deliberate overlap with the following chapter that some readers may find slightly confusing: labeled at the outset as dealing explicitly with the years 1100–1400, the opening pages repeatedly refer to 1500 as the terminus ad quem (pp. 71–72) as does a later reference (p. 110).

In "Empires, Frontiers and Renewers (1400–1800)" Green modulates slightly the key of the overarching case he has been building: that some isolable phenomenon called "Sufism" was never actually a discrete target of criticism, let alone condemnation. Criticism in fact took the form of individual Muslims (even Sufis) arguing against specific other Muslims (who were Sufis) or *particular features* of theory or practice more broadly associated with "Sufi Islam." Broadening his geographical compass still further (now prominently including southeast Asia and large regions of Africa), Green argues that significant changes in Sufi institutions are attributable largely to power shifts in their relationships to institutions of governance in pre/early-modern political regimes (in part what Marshall Hodgson called the "gunpowder empires"). In his words, Green traces "the ambivalent role of Sufism in the major empires and regional sultanates . . . by examining the ways in which Sufism offered these states means of ideological authority, social coherence and imperial expansion, while at the same time providing vehicles for sedition and localizing fracture" (pp. 127–28). He notes as especially important institutionally the branching off of "sub-brotherhoods" from the original "orders" with the purpose of stabilizing areas of social and political upheaval. All in all, this is an engagingly clear treatment of an immense and complex set of developments.

Green's final chapter is the best compact overview of modern and contemporary developments in Sufi Islam that I have read. He treats the century and a half from 1800–1950 from two perspectives: Sufism's movement from resistance to accommodation to the three greatest colonial powers (British, French, and Russian), and the more troubled fortunes of Sufi institutions "beyond the colonial sphere." While the former section deals largely with somewhat better-known material, Green keeps chipping away at accepted interpretations that bear reconsideration. And in the latter, the itinerary takes the reader further off the beaten path into fascinating corners of Sufi Islam, exploring often unique (and not always successful) accommodations to rapidly changing political contexts and metamorphoses in Islamist and modernist ideologies. For the final fifty years, 1950–2000, Green introduces major figures behind ongoing efforts to tend the hearth of Sufi Islam both in the "old world" and "the west." Beautifully organized and very readable, the chapter offers a sweeping synthesis that both summarizes the best of recent studies in a way that specialists in Sufism will find engaging, and represents perhaps a pedagogically superb text for students new to the subject. At the heart of Green's success, here as throughout the book, is his clarity and credibility in discerning and describing "patterns" and themes holding this large scenario together.

On the functional side, four maps are welcome for teaching purposes, but would have been easier to use had the captions indicated in the list of maps and illustrations been supplied on their respective maps as well. Twenty half-tone illustrations represent an arresting mix of themes and locations. The index is generous, and the glossary is adequate for an "introductory" survey. Green's writing style is clear, accessible, and mercifully free of idiosyncratic theoretical jargon, long-winded circumlocutions, and (I hasten to add) professorialisms.

Given the book's genre, scope, and size, Green has managed to challenge perhaps more oft-repeated and outmoded views per page than any recent contribution to the history of Sufism. Throughout, Green accounts adroitly for a broad spectrum of literary genres developed for communicating and preserving Sufi tradition, and weaves into his narrative welcome references to architecture and the arts. He has produced a fine addition to the field, replete with engaging perspectives and the kind of provocative insight one would expect from either a much larger or a far more detailed study. Green has in a way done for the history of "Sufi Islam" what Marshall Hodgson sought to do for the larger study of Islamdom: he has suggested broad patterns and tied together previously loose threads that offer a convincingly integrative picture of his subject. Not unlike the ubiquitous "spirit shaykh" Khidr (the "green" man) featured on the cover, our Green seems unbounded by either time or space in his capacity for capturing a very expansive picture within a relatively small frame.

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